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SOME ACCOUNT
OF THE
LIFE AND DEATH
OF
JOHN WILMOT,
EARL OF ROCHESTER,

WHO DIED JULY 25, 1680.

WRITTEN BY HIS OWN DIRECTION ON HIS
DEATH-BED.

BY GILBERT BURNET

Lord Bishop of Sarum.

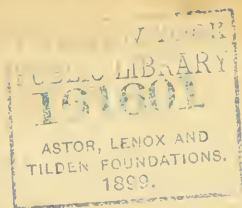
TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,
AN ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR'S LIFE.

BOSTON:
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1812.

Spencer.

1812



THE LIFE
OF
GILBERT BURNET.

GILBERT BURNET, bishop of Salisbury in the latter end of the seventeenth century, was born at Edinburgh, in 1643, of an ancient family in the shire of Aberdeen. His father, being bred to the law, was, at the restoration of king Charles II., appointed one of the lords of session, with the title of lord Crimond, in reward for his constant attachment to the royal party during the troubles of Great-Britain. Our author, the youngest son of his father,

was instructed by him in the Latin tongue. At ten years of age, he was sent to continue his studies at Aberdeen, and was admitted M. A. before he was fourteen. His own inclination led him to the study of the civil and feudal law ; and he used to say, that it was from this study he had received more just notions concerning the foundations of civil society and government, than those, which some divines attain. About a year after, he changed his mind, and began to apply to divinity, to the great satisfaction of his father. He was admitted preacher, before he was eighteen ; and Sir Alexander Burnet, his cousin-german, offered him a benefice ; but he refused to accept it.

In 1663, about two years after the death of his father, he came into England ; and after six months' stay at Oxford and Cambridge, returned to Scotland ; which he

soon left again to make a tour for some months, in 1664, in Holland and France. At Amsterdam, by the help of a Jewish Rabbi, he perfected himself in the Hebrew language ; and likewise became acquainted with the leading men of the different persuasions, tolerated in that country ; as Calvinists, Arminians, Lutherans, Anabaptists, Brownists, Papists, and Unitarians ; amongst each of which, he used frequently to declare, he met with men of such unfeigned piety and virtue, that he became fixed in a strong principle of universal charity, and an invincible abhorrence of all severities on account of religious dissensions.

Upon his return from his travels, he was admitted minister of Salton ; in which station he served five years in the most exemplary manner. He drew up a memorial, in which he took notice of the prin-

cipal errours in the conduct of the Scots
 bishops, which he observed not to be
 conformable to the primitive institution ;
 and sent a copy of it to several of them.
 This exposed him to their resentment :
 but, to show, that he was not actuated with
 a spirit of ambition, he led a retired course
 of life for two years, which so endanger-
 ed his health, that he was obliged to abate
 his excessive application to study. In
 1669, he published his “ Modest and free
 Conference between a Conformist and a
 Non-conformist.” He became acquaint-
 ed with the duchess of Hamilton, who
 communicated to him all the papers be-
 longing to her father and uncle ; upon
 which he drew up the “ Memoirs of the
 dukes of Hamilton.” The duke of
 Lauderdale, hearing he was about this
 work, invited him to London, and introdu-
 ced him to king Charles II.

He returned to Scotland, and married the lady Margaret Kennedy, daughter of the earl of Cassils, a lady of great piety and knowledge, highly esteemed by the Presbyterians, to whose sentiments she was strongly inclined. As there was some disparity in their ages, that it might remain past dispute, that this match was wholly owing to inclination, and not to avarice or ambition, the day before their marriage our author delivered the lady a deed, whereby he renounced all pretensions to her fortune, which was very considerable, and must otherwise have fallen into his hands, she herself having no intention to secure it.

The same year he published his “ Vindication of the Authority, Constitution, and Laws of the Church and State of Scotland ;” which, at that juncture, was looked upon as so great a service, that he was again offered a bishoprick, and a promise

of the next vacant archbishoprick ; but he did not accept it, because he could not approve of the measures of the court, the grand view of which he saw to be the advancement of popery.

Mr. Burnet's intimacy with the duke of Hamilton and Lauderdale, occasioned him to be frequently sent for by the king and the duke of York, who had conversations with him in private. But Lauderdale, conceiving a resentment against him, on account of the freedom, with which he spoke to him, represented at last to the king, that Dr. Burnet was engaged in an opposition to his measures. Upon his return to London, he perceived, that these suggestions had entirely thrown him out of the king's favour, though the duke of York treated him with greater civility, than ever, and dissuaded him from going to Scotland. Upon this, he resigned his pro-

fessorship at Glasgow, and staid at London. About this time, the living at Cripple-Gate being vacant, the dean and chapter of St. Paul's, (in whose gift it was,) hearing of his circumstances, and the hardships he had undergone, sent him an offer of the benefice ; but, as he had been informed of their first intention of conferring it on Dr. Fowler, he generously declined it. In 1675, at the recommendation of lord Hollis, whom he had known in France, ambassadour at that court, he was, by sir Herbottle Grimstone, master of the rolls, appointed preacher of the chapel there, notwithstanding the opposition of the court. He was, soon after, chosen a lecturer of St. Clement's, and became one of the preachers that were most followed in town. In 1679, he published his " History of the Reformation," for which he had the thanks of both houses of parliament. The first part of it was

published in 1679, and the second in 1681. The next year, he published an abridgment of these two parts.

Mr. Burnet, about this time, happened to be sent for to a woman in sickness, who had been engaged in an amour with the earl of Rochester. The manner in which he treated her during her illness, gave that lord a great curiosity for being acquainted with him : whereupon, for a whole winter, he spent one evening in a week with Dr. Burnet, who discoursed with him upon all those topicks, upon which skepticks and men of loose morals attack the Christian religion. The happy effect of these conferences occasioned the publication of the life and death of that earl. In 1682, when the administration was changed in favour of the duke of York, being much resorted to by persons of all ranks and parties, in order to avoid returning visits, he built a

laboratory, and went, for above a year, through a course of chemical experiments. Not long after, he refused a living of 300*l.* a year, offered him by the earl of Essex, on the terms of his not residing there, but in London. When the inquiry concerning the popish plot was on foot, he was frequently sent for and consulted by king Charles, with relation to the state of the nation. His majesty offered him the bishoprick of Chicester, then vacant, if he would engage in his interests ; but he refused to accept it on these terms. He preached at the rolls, till 1684, when he was dismissed by order of the court. About this time, he published several pieces.

On king James's accession to the throne, having obtained leave to go out of the kingdom, he first went to Paris, and lived there in great retirement, till, contracting an acquaintance with brigadier

Stouppe, a protestant gentleman in the French service, he made a tour with him into Italy. He met with an agreeable reception at Rome. Pope Innocent II., hearing of our author's arrival, sent the captain of the Swiss guards to acquaint him, he would give him a private audience in bed, to avoid the ceremony of kissing His Holiness' slipper. But Dr. Burnet excused himself as well as he could. Some disputes, which our author had here, concerning religion, beginning to be taken notice of, made it proper for him to quit the city; which, upon an intimation given him by the prince Borghese, he accordingly did.

He pursued his travels through Switzerland and Germany. In 1688, he came to Utrecht with an intention to settle in some one of the Seven Provinces. There he received an invitation from the prince and princess of Orange (to whom their

party in England had recommended him) to come to the Hague, which he accepted. He was soon made acquainted with the secret of their counsels, and advised the fitting out of a fleet in Holland, sufficient to support their designs and encourage their friends. This, and the "Account of his Travels," in which he endeavoured to blend tyranny and popery together, and represent them as inseparable, with some papers reflecting on the proceedings of England, that came out in single sheets, and were dispersed in several parts of England, most of which Mr. Burnet owned himself the author of, alarmed king James; and were the occasion of his writing twice against him to the princess of Orange, and insisting, by his ambassadour, on his being forbid the court; which, after much importunity, was done, though he continued to be trusted and employed as before, the

Dutch minister consulting him daily. To put an end to these frequent conferences with the ministers, a prosecution for high treason was set on foot against him, both in England and Scotland. But Burnet receiving the news thereof before it arrived at the States, he avoided the storm, by petitioning for and obtaining, without any difficulty, a bill of naturalization, in order to his intended marriage with Mary Scot, a Dutch lady of considerable fortune, who, with the advantages of birth, had those of a fine person and understanding.

After his marriage with this lady, being legally under the protection of Holland, when Mr. Burnet found king James plainly subverting the constitution, he omitted no method to support and promote the design the prince of Orange had formed of delivering Great-Britain, and came over with him in quality of chaplain. He was

soon advanced to the see of Salisbury. He declared for moderate measures with regard to the clergy, who scrupled to take the oaths, and many were displeased with him for declaring for the toleration of non-conformists. His pastoral letter concerning the oaths of allegiance and supremacy to king William and queen Mary, 1689, happening to touch upon the right of conquest, gave such offence to both houses of parliament, that it was ordered to be burnt by the hands of the common executioner. In 1698, he lost his wife, by the small-pox ; and as he was almost immediately after appointed preceptor to the duke of Gloucester, in whose education he took great care ; this employment, and the tender age of his children, induced him the same year to supply her loss by a marriage with Mrs. Berkely, eldest daughter of sir Richard Blake, knight. In 1699, he pub-

lished his “ Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles ;” which occasioned a representation against him in the lower house of convocation, in the year 1701 ; but he was vindicated by the upper house. His speech, in the house of lords, in 1704, against the bill to prevent occasional conformity, was severely attacked. He died in 1715, and was interred in the church of St. James, Clerkenwell, where he has a monument erected to him. He formed a scheme for augmenting the poor livings ; which he pressed forward with such success, that it ended in an act of parliament, passed in the second year of queen Anne, “ for the augmentation of the livings of the poor clergy.”

BURNET'S
ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE AND DEATH
OF THE
EARL OF ROCHESTER.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE DIVISION OF THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES

THE DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

THE LABORATORY OF PHYSICAL CHEMISTRY

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PREFACE.

THE celebrating of the praises of the dead, is an argument so worn out by long and frequent use, and now become so nauseous, by the flattery that usually attends it, that it is no wonder if funeral orations, or panegyricks, are more considered for the elegance of style, and fineness of wit, than for the authority they carry with them, as to the truth of matters of fact. And yet I am not hereby deterred from meddling with this kind of argument, nor from handling it with all the plainness I can : delivering only what I myself heard and saw, without any borrowed ornament.

I do easily foresee how many will be engaged for the support of their impious maxims and immoral practices, to disparage what I am to write. Others will censure it, because it comes from one of my profession, too many supposing us to be indu-

ced to frame such discourses for carrying on what they are pleased to call *our trade*. Some will think I dress it up too artificially, and others, that I present it too plain and naked.

But, being resolved to govern myself by the exact rules of truth, I shall be less concerned in the censures I may fall under. It may seem liable to great exception, that I should disclose so many things, that were discovered to me, if not under the seal of confession, yet under the confidence of friendship ; but this noble lord himself not only released me from all obligations of this kind, when I waited on him in his last sickness, a few days before he died, but gave it me in charge, not to spare him in any thing, which I thought might be of use to the living ; and was not ill pleased to be laid open, as well in the worst as in the best and last part of his life ; being so sincere in his repentance, that he was not unwilling to take shame to himself, by suffering his faults to be exposed for the benefit of others.

I write with one great disadvantage—that I cannot reach his chief design, without mentioning some of his faults : but I have touched them as tenderly as occasion would bear ; and I am sure with

much more softness than he desired, or would have consented to, had I told him how I intended to manage this part. I have related nothing with personal reflections on any others concerned with him ; wishing rather they themselves, reflecting on the sense he had of his former disorders, may be thereby led to forsake their own, than that they should be any ways reproached by what I write ; and therefore, though he used very few reserves with me, as to his course of life, yet, since others had a share in most parts of it, I shall relate nothing but what more immediately concerned himself ; and shall say no more of his faults, than is necessary to illustrate his repentance.

The occasion, that led me into so particular a knowledge of him, was an intimation, given me by a gentleman of his acquaintance, of his desire to see me. This was sometime in October, 1679, when he was slowly recovering out of a great disease. He had understood, that I had often attended on one well known to him, that died the summer before ; he was also then entertaining himself, in that low state of health, with the first part of the *History of the Reformation*, then newly come out, with which

he seemed not ill pleased ; and we had accidentally met in two or three places some time before.

These were the motives, that led him to call for my company. After I had waited on him once or twice, he grew into that freedom with me, as to open to me all his thoughts, both of religion and morality, and to give me a full view of his past life, and seemed not uneasy at my frequent visits. So, till he went from London, which was in the beginning of April, I waited on him often.

As soon as I heard how ill he was, and how much he was touched with the sense of his former life, I wrote to him, and received from him an answer, that, without my knowledge, was printed since his death, from a copy, which one of his servants conveyed to the press. In it there is so undeserved a value put on me, that it had been very indecent for me to have published it : yet that must be attributed to his civility and way of breeding : and indeed he was particularly known to so few of the clergy, that the good opinion he had of me, is to be imputed only to his unacquaintance with others.

My end in writing, is so to discharge the last commands this lord left on me, as that it may be effectual to awaken those, who run on to all the exces-

ses of riot ; and that in the midst of those heats, which their lusts and passions raise in them, they may be a little wrought on by so great an instance of one, who had run round the whole circle of luxury ; and, as *Solomon* says of himself, *Whatsoever his eyes desired, he kept it not from them ; and withheld his heart from no joy*. But when he looked back, on all that, on which he had wasted his time and strength, he esteemed it vanity and vexation of spirit : though he had both as much natural wit, and as much acquired learning, and was as much improved by thinking and study, as perhaps any libertine of the age. Yet, when he reflected on all his former courses, even before his mind was illuminated with better thoughts, he counted them madness and folly.

But when the power of religion came to operate on him, he added a detestation to the contempt he formerly had of them, suitable to what became a sincere penitent, and expressed himself in so clear and so calm a manner; so sensible of his failings towards his Maker and his Redeemer, that, as it wrought not a little on those, that were about him, so, I hope, the making it publick may have a more general influence, chiefly on those on whom his former conversation might have had ill effects.

I have endeavoured to give his character as fully as I could take it ; but as I saw him only in one light, in a sedate and quiet temper, when he was under a great decay of strength and loss of spirits ; I cannot give his picture with that life and advantage that others may, who knew him when his parts were more lively : yet the composure he was then in may perhaps be supposed to balance any abatement of his usual vigour, which the decline of his health brought him under.

I have written this discourse with as much care, and have considered it as narrowly as I could. I am sure, I have said nothing but truth. I have done it slowly, and often used my second thoughts in it ; not being so much concerned in the censures which might fall on myself, as cautious that nothing should pass, that might obstruct my only design of writing, which is the doing what I can towards reforming a loose and lewd age.

And if such a signal instance, concurring with all the evidence we have for our most holy faith has no effect on those who are running the same course, it is much to be feared they are given up to a reprobate sense.

LIFE AND DEATH
OF THE
EARL OF ROCHESTER.

JOHN WILMOT, earl of Rochester, was born in April, Anno Domini, 1648. His father was Henry, earl of Rochester, but best known by the title of lord Wilmot, who bore so conspicuous a part in all the late wars, that mention is often made of him in the history. He had the chief share in the honour of the preservation of Charles II. after Worcester fight, and the conveying him from place to place, till he happily

escaped into France ; but, dying before the king's return, he left his son little other inheritance, than the honour and title derived to him, with the pretensions such eminent services gave him to the king's favour. These were carefully managed by the great prudence and discretion of his mother, a daughter of that noble and ancient family of the St. Johns of Wiltshire, so that his education was carried on in all things according to his quality.

When he was at school, he was an extraordinary proficient at his book ; and those shining parts, which have since appeared with so much lustre, began then to shew themselves. He acquired the Latin to such perfection, that, to his dying day, he retained a great relish for the fineness and beauty of that tongue ; and was exactly versed in the incomparable authors, that wrote about Augustus's time, whom he read often with that peculiar delight, which the greatest wits have ever found in those studies.

When he went to the university, the

general joy, that over-ran the whole nation upon his majesty's restoration, but was not regulated with that sobriety and temperance, that became a serious gratitude to God for so great a blessing, produced some of its ill effects on him : He began to love these disorders too much.

His tutor was that eminent and pious divine, Dr. Blandford, afterwards promoted to the sees of Oxford and Worcester. And under his inspection, he was committed to the more immediate care of Mr. Phineas Berry, a fellow of Wadham college, a very learned and good-natured man, whom he afterwards used with much respect, and rewarded as became a great man. But the humour of that time wrought so much on him, that he broke off the course of his studies, to which no means could ever effectually recal him ; till, when he was in Italy, his governour, Dr. Balfour, (a worthy and learned man, now a celebrated physician in Scotland, his native country) drew him to read such books, as were most likely to bring him

back to love learning and study : and he often acknowledged to me, in particular three days before his death, how much he was obliged to love and honour this governor, to whom he thought he owed more, than to all the world, next to his parents, for his care and fidelity of him, while he was under his trust.

But no part of it affected him more sensibly, than that he engaged him by many tricks (so he expressed it) to delight in books and reading ; so that, ever after, he took occasion, in the intervals of those woful extravagances, that consumed most of his time, to read much : and though the time was generally but indifferently employed, (for the choice of the subjects of his studies was not always good) yet the habitual love of knowledge, together with these fits of study, had much awakened his understanding, and prepared him for better things, when his mind should be so far changed as to relish them.

He came from his travels in the 18th year of his age, and appeared at court with

as great advantages as most ever had. He was a graceful and well-shaped person, tall, and well made, if not a little too slender. He was well bred ; and what, by a modest behaviour natural to him, and what, by a civility become almost as natural, his conversation was easy and obliging. He had a strange vivacity of thought, and vigour of expression. His wit had a subtilty and sublimity that were scarcely imitable. His style was clear and strong. When he used figures, they were very lively, and yet far enough out of the common road. He had made himself master of the ancient and modern wits, and of the modern French and Italian, as well as the English. He loved to talk and write of speculative matters, and did it with so fine a thread, that even those, that hated the subjects that his fancy run upon, could not but be charmed with his way of treating them. Boileau among the French, and Cowley among the English wits, were those he admired most. Sometimes other men's thoughts

mixed with his composures ; but that flowed rather from the impressions they made on him, when he read them, by which they came to return upon him as his own thoughts, than that he servilely copied them from any. For few men ever had a bolder flight of fancy, more steadily governed by judgment, than he had. No wonder a young man, so made and so improved, was very acceptable in a court.

Soon after his coming thither, he laid hold on the first occasion that offered, to shew his readiness to hazard his life in the defence and service of his country.

In the winter of 1665, he went with the earl of Sandwich to sea, when he was sent to lie in wait for the Dutch East-India fleet ; and was in the *Revenge*, commanded by sir Thomas Tiddiman, when the attack was made on the port of Bergen in Norway, the Dutch ships having got into that port. It was as desperate an attempt as ever was made : during the whole action, the earl of Rochester shewed as brave and as resolute courage, as was possible. A

person of honour told me, he heard the lord Clifford, who was in the same ship, often magnify his courage at that time very highly. Nor did the rigours of the season, the hardness of the voyage, and the extreme dangers he had been in, deter him from running the like on the very next occasion : for, in the summer following, he went to sea again, without communicating his design to his nearest relations. He went on board the ship commanded by sir Edward Sprague, the day before the great sea-fight of that year. Almost all the volunteers, that were in the same ship, were killed. Mr. Middleton, (brother to sir Hugh Middleton) was shot in his arm. During the action, sir Edward Sprague, not being satisfied with the behaviour of one of the captains, could not easily find a person, who would cheerfully venture through so much danger, to carry his commands to that captain. This lord offered himself to the service ; and went in a little boat through all the shot, and delivered his message, and returned back to sir Edward : which was

much commended by all that saw it. He thought it necessary to begin his life with these demonstrations of his courage, in an element and way of fighting, which is acknowledged to be the greatest trial of clear and undaunted valour.

He had so entirely laid down the intemperance, that was growing on him before his travels, that, at his return, he hated nothing more. But, falling into company that loved these excesses, he was, though not without difficulty, and by many steps, brought back to it again ; and the natural heat of his fancy, being inflamed by wine, made him so extravagantly pleasant, that many, to be more diverted by that humour, studied to engage him in deeper and deeper intemperance ; which at length did so entirely subdue him, that, as he told me, for five years together, he was continually drunk : not all the while under the visible effect of it, but his blood was so inflamed, that he was not in all that time cool enough to be perfectly master of himself. This

led him to say and do many wild and unaccountable things. By this, he said, he had broken the firm constitution of his health, which seemed so strong, that nothing was too hard for it ; and he had suffered so much in his reputation, that he almost despaired to recover it.

There were principles in his natural temper, that, being heightened by that heat, carried him to great excesses—a violent love of pleasure, and a disposition to extravagant mirth. The one involved him in great sensuality ; the other led him to many odd adventures and frolicks, in which he was often in hazard of his life. The one being the same irregular appetite in mind, that the other was in his body, which made him think nothing diverting, that was not extravagant. And though in cold blood he was a generous and good-natured man, yet he would go too far in his heats, after any thing that might turn to a jest or matter of diversion.

He said to me, that he never improved his interest at court to do a premeditated

mischief to other persons. Yet he laid out his wit very freely in libels and satires, in which he had a peculiar talent of mixing his wit with his malice, and fitting both with such apt words, that men were tempted to be pleased with them ; from thence his composures came to be easily known, for few had such a way of tempering these together as he had. So that, when any thing extraordinary that way came out, as a child is sometimes fathered by its resemblance; so it was laid at his door as its parent and author.

These exercises in the course of his life were not always equally pleasant to him ; he had often sad intervals and severe reflections on them. And though then he had not these awakened in him from any principle of religion, yet the horror, that nature raised in him, especially in some sicknesses, made him too easy to receive some ill principles, which others endeavoured to possess him with ; so that he was soon brought to set himself to secure and fortify his mind against that, by dispossessing it,

all he could, of the belief or apprehension of religion.

The licentiousness of his temper, with the briskness of his wit, disposed him to love the conversation of those, who divided their time between lewd actions and irregular mirth ; and so came to bend his wit and direct his studies and endeavours to strengthen and support these ill principles both in himself and others.

An accident fell out after this, which confirmed him more in these courses. When he went to sea, in the year 1665, there happened to be in the same ship with him, Mr. Montague, and another gentleman of quality ; these two, the former especially, seemed persuaded, that they should never return to England. Mr. Montague said, he was sure of it ; the other was not so positive. The earl of Rochester, and the last of these, entered into a formal engagement, not without ceremonies of religion, that, if either of them died, he should appear and give the other notice of the future state, if there was any. Mr. Mon-

tague would not enter into the bond. When the day came, that they thought to have taken the Dutch fleet in the port of Bergen, Mr. Montague, though he had such a strong presage in his mind of his approaching death, yet generally staid all the while in a place of the greatest danger. The other gentleman signalized his courage in a most undaunted manner, till near the end of the action, when he fell on a sudden into a trembling, so that he could scarcely stand : and, Mr. Montague going up to him to hold him up, as they were in each other's arms, a cannon-ball killed him outright, and carried away Mr. Montague's belly, so that he died within an hour after.

The earl of Rochester told me, that these presages, they had in their minds, made some impression on him, that there were separate beings ; and that the soul, either by a natural sagacity, or some secret notice communicated to it, had a sort of divination. But that gentleman's never appearing was a great snare to him during the rest of his life. Though, when he told

me this, he could not but acknowledge, that it was an unreasonable thing to think, that beings in another state were not under such laws and limits, that they could not command their own motions, but as the Supreme Power should order them ; and that one, who had so corrupted the natural principles of truth, as he had, had no reason to expect, that such an extraordinary thing should be done for his conviction.

He also told me of another odd presage, that one had of his approaching death, in his mother-in-law's (the lady Warre) house. The chaplain dreamed, that, such a day, he should die, but, being by all the family put out of the belief of it, he had almost forgotten it ; till, the evening before, at supper, there being thirteen at table, according to fond conceit, that one of these must soon die, one of the young ladies pointed to him, that he was to die. He remembering his dream, fell into some disorder, and the lady Warre reproving him for his superstition, he said, he was confident he was to

die before morning ; but, he being in perfect health, it was not much minded. It was Saturday night, and he was to preach the next day. He went to his chamber, and sat up late, as appeared by the burning of his candle, and had been preparing his notes for his sermon, but was found dead in his bed the next morning. These things, he said, led him to believe, the soul was a substance distinct from matter ; and this often returned into his thoughts. But that, which perfected his persuasion about it, was, that in the sickness, which brought him so near his death before I first knew him, when his spirits were so low and spent, that he could not move nor stir, and did not expect to live an hour ; he said, his reason and judgment were so clear and strong, that from thence he was fully persuaded, that death was not the spending or dissolution of the soul, but only the separation of it from matter. He had in that sickness great remorse for his past life ; but he afterwards told me, they were rather general and dark horrors, than any con-

victions of sinning against God. He was sorry he lived so as to waste his strength so soon, or that he had brought such an ill name upon himself ; and had an agony in his mind about it, which he knew not well how to express. But at such times, though he complied with his friends in suffering divines to be sent for, he said he had no great mind to it ; and that it was but a piece of his breeding, to desire them to pray by him, in which he joined but little himself.

As to the Supreme Being, he had always some impression of one ; and professed often to me, that he had never known an entire atheist, who fully believed there was no God. Yet, when he explained his notion of that being, it amounted to no more than a vast power, that had none of the attributes of goodness and justice we ascribe to the Deity. These were his thoughts about religion, as he himself told me.

For morality, he freely owned to me, that, though he talked of it as a fine thing,

yet this was only because he thought it a decent way of speaking ; and that, as they went always in clothes, though in their frolicks they would have chosen sometimes to have gone naked, if they had not feared the people ; so, though some of them found it necessary for human life to talk of morality, yet he confessed they cared not for it, further than the reputation of it was necessary for their credit and affairs ; of which he gave me many instances, as their professing and swearing friendship, where they hated morality ; their oaths and imprecations in their addresses to women, which they intended never to make good ; the pleasure they took in defaming innocent persons, and spreading false reports of some, perhaps in revenge, because they could not engage them to comply with their ill designs ; the delight they had in making people quarrel ; their unjust usage of their creditors, and putting them off by any deceitful promise they could invent, that might deliver them from present importunity. So that, in detestation of these

courses, he would often break forth into such hard expressions concerning himself, as would be indecent for another to repeat.

Such had been his principles and practices in a course of many years, which had almost quite extinguished the natural propensities in him to justice and virtue. He would often go into the country, and be for some months wholly employed in study, or the sallies of his wit; - which he directed chiefly to satire. And this he often defended to me, by saying, there were some people, who could not be kept in order or admonished but in this way. I replied, that it might be granted, that a grave way of satire was sometimes no unprofitable way of reproof; yet they, who used it only out of spite, and mixed lies with truth, sparing nothing, that might adorn their poems, or gratify their revenge, could not excuse that way of reproach, by which the innocent often suffer; since the most malicious things, if wittily expressed, might stick to

and blemish the best character in the world ; and the malice of a libel could hardly consist with the charity of an admonition. To this he answered, that a man could not write with life, unless he was heated by revenge : for, to make a satire, without resentment, on the cold notions of *philosophy*, was as if a man would in cold blood cut men's throats, who had never offended him. And he said, the lies in these libels came often in as ornaments, that could not be spared, without spoiling the beauty of the poem.

For his other studies, they were divided between the comical and witty writings of the ancients and moderns, the *Roman* authors, and books of physick, which the ill state of health he was fallen into made more necessary to himself ; and which qualified him for an odd adventure, which I shall but just mention. Being under an unlucky accident, which obliged him to keep out of the way, he disguised himself so that his nearest friends could not have

known him, and set up in Tower-street for an Italian mountebank, where he practised physick for some weeks, not without success. In his latter years he read books of history more. He took pleasure to disguise himself as a porter, or as a beggar ; sometimes to follow some mean amours, which, for the variety of them, he affected. At other times, merely for diversion, he would go about in odd shapes, in which he acted his part so naturally, that even those that were in the secret, and saw him in these shapes, could perceive nothing by which he might be discovered.

I have now made the description of his former life and principles, as fully as I thought necessary to answer my end in writing ; and yet with those reserves, that, I hope, I have given no just cause of offence to any. I have said nothing, but what I had from his own mouth ; and have avoided the mentioning of the more particular passages of his life, of which he told me not a few. But since others were concerned in them, whose good only I design,

I will say nothing that may provoke or blemish them. It is their reformation, and not their disgrace, I desire. This tender consideration of others has made me suppress many remarkable and useful things he told me. But finding, that though I should name none, yet I must relate such circumstances as would give great occasion for the reader to conjecture, concerning the persons intended, right or wrong, either of which were inconvenient enough, I have chosen to pass them quite over. But I hope those, that know how much they were engaged with him in his ill courses, will be somewhat touched with this tenderness I express towards them ; and be thereby rather induced to reflect on their ways, and to consider, without prejudice or passion, what a sense this noble lord had of their case, when he came at last seriously to reflect upon his own.

I now turn to those parts of this narrative, wherein I myself bore some share ; and which I am to deliver upon the observations I made, after a long and free conver-

sation with him for some months. I was not long in his company, before he told me, he should treat me with more freedom, than he had ever used to men of my profession. He would conceal none of his principles from me, but lay his thoughts open without any disguise ; nor would he do it to maintain debate or shew his wit, but plainly tell me what stuck with him. And he protested to me, that he was not so engaged to his old maxims, as to resolve not to change ; but, if he could be convinced, he would choose rather to be of another mind. He said, he would impartially weigh, what I should lay before him ; and tell me freely, when it did convince him, and when it did not. He expressed this disposition of mind to me in a manner so frank, that I could not but believe him, and be much taken with his way of discourse. So we entered into almost all the parts of natural and of revealed religion, and of morality. He seemed pleased, and in a great measure satisfied, with what I said on many of these heads. And though our

freest conversation was when we were alone, yet, upon several occasions, other persons were witnesses to it. I understood from many hands, that my company was not distasteful to him, and that the subjects, about which we talked most, were not unacceptable. And he expressed himself often not ill pleased with many things I said to him, and particularly when I visited him in his last sickness: so that, I hope, it may not be altogether unprofitable to publish the substance of those matters, about which we argued so freely, with our reasoning upon them. And perhaps what had some effect on him may not be altogether ineffectual upon others.

I followed him with such arguments, as I found were most likely to prevail with him. And my not urging other reasons, proceeded not from any distrust I had of their force, but from the necessity of using those that were most proper for him. He was then in a low state of health, and seemed to be slowly recovering from a great disease. He was in the milk diet,

and apt to fall into hec tick fits : any accident weakened him, so that he thought he could not live long. And when he went from London, he said he believed he never should come to town more. Yet, during his being in town, he was so well, that he went often abroad, and had great vivacity of spirits. So that he was under no such decay, as either darkened or weakened his understanding ; nor was he any way troubled with the spleen or vapours, or under the power of melancholy.

What he was then, compared to what he had been formerly, I could not so well judge, who had seen him but twice before. Others have told me, they perceived no difference in his parts. This I mention more particularly, that it may not be thought, that melancholy, or want of spirits, made him more inclined to receive any impressions ; for indeed I never discovered any such thing in him.

Having thus opened my way to the heads of our discourse, I shall next mention them. The three chief things we talked

about were, *morality, natural religion, and revealed religion*, Christianity in particular. For morality, he confessed he saw the necessity of it, both for the government of the world, and the preservation of health, life, and friendship ; and was very much ashamed of his former practices, rather because he had made himself a beast, and brought pain and sickness upon his body, and had suffered much in his reputation, than from any deep sense of a Supreme Being, or another state. But so far this went with him, that he firmly resolved to change the course of his life, which he thought he should effect by the study of philosophy, and had not a few solid and pleasant notions concerning the folly and madness of vice. But he confessed, he had no remorse for his past actions or offences against God, but only as injuries to himself and to mankind.

Upon this subject I shewed him the effects of philosophy for reforming the world ; that it was a matter of speculation, which but few either had the leisure or the

capacity to inquire into. But the principle, that must reform mankind, must be obvious to every man's understanding. That philosophy, in matters of morality, beyond the great lines of our duty, had no very certain, fixed rule ; but the lesser offices and instances of our duty went much by the fancies of men, and customs of nations ; and consequently could not have authority enough to bear down the propensities of nature, appetite, or passion. For which I instanced in these two points.

The one was about that maxim of the Stoicks, to extirpate all sorts of passion and concern for any thing. That, take it on one hand, seemed desirable ; because if it could be accomplished, it would make all the accidents of life easy ; but I think it cannot, because nature, after all our striving against it, will still return to itself. Yet, on the other hand, it dissolved the bond of nature and friendship, and slackened industry, which will move but dully without an inward heat ; and if it delivered a man of

many troubles, it deprived him of the chief pleasures of life, which arise from friendship.

The other was concerning the restraint of pleasure, how far that was to go. Upon this, he told me, the two maxims of his morality then were, that he should do nothing to the hurt of any other, or that might prejudice his own health. And he thought, that all pleasure, when it did not interfere with these, was to be indulged, as the gratification of our natural appetites. It seemed unreasonable to imagine these were put into a man only to be restrained, or curbed to such a narrowness. This he applied to the free use of wine and women.

To this I answered, that if appetites being natural was an argument for indulging them, then the revengeful might as well allege it for murder, and the covetous for stealing, whose appetites are no less keen on those objects ; and yet it is acknowledged, that these appetites ought to be curbed. If the difference is urged from the injury another person receives, the injury is

as great, if a man's wife is defiled, or his daughter corrupted : and it is impossible for a man to let loose his appetites to vagrant lusts, and not transgress in these particulars. So there was no curing the disorders, that must rise from thence, but by regulating these appetites. And why should we not as well think, that God intended our brutish and sensual appetites should be governed by our reason, as that the fierceness of beasts should be managed and tamed by the wisdom, and for the use, of man ? So that it is no real absurdity to grant, that these appetites were put into men on purpose to exercise their reason in the restraint and government of them ; which, to be able to do, ministers a higher and more lasting pleasure to a man, than to give them their full scope and range. And if other rules in philosophy be observed, such as the avoiding of those objects that stir passions, nothing raises higher passions, than ungoverned lust ; nothing darkens the understanding, and depresses a man's mind more, nor is any thing managed with

more frequent returns of other immoralities, than such oaths and imprecations as are only intended to compass what is desired. The expense, that is necessary to maintain these irregularities, makes a man false in his other dealings.

All this he freely confessed was true ; upon which I urged, that if it was reasonable for a man to regulate his appetite in things which he knew to be hurtful to him, was it not reasonable for God to prescribe a regulation of these appetites, whose unrestrained courses did produce such mischievous effects ? That it could not be denied, but doing to others what we would have others do unto us, was a just rule. Those men then, that knew how extremely sensible they themselves would be of the disgrace of their families, in case of the dishonour of their wives or daughters, must needs condemn themselves for doing that which they could not bear from another. And if the peace of mankind, and the entire satisfaction of our whole life, ought to be one of the chief measures of

our actions, then let all the world judge, whether a man that confines his appetite, and lives contented at home, is not much happier, than those who let their desires run after forbidden objects.

The thing being granted to be better in itself, then the question falls between the restraint of appetite in some instances, and the freedom of a man's thoughts, the soundness of his health, his application to affairs, with the easiness of his whole life. Whether the one is not to be done before the other? As to the difficulty of such a restraint, tho' it is not easy to be done when a man allows himself many liberties, in which it is not possible to stop; yet those, who avoid the occasions, that may kindle these impure flames, and keep themselves well employed, find the victory and dominion over them no such impossible or hard matter as may seem at first view.

So that, though the philosophy and morality of this point were plain, yet there is

not strength enough in that principle to subdue nature and appetite.

Upon this I urged, that morality could not be a strong thing, unless a man was determined by a law within himself : for if he only measured himself by decency, or the laws of the land, this would teach him only to use such caution in his ill practices, that they should not break out too visibly ; but would never carry him to an inward and universal probity. That virtue was of so complicated a nature, that unless man became entirely within its discipline, he could not adhere steadfastly to any one precept ; for vices are often made necessary supports to one another. That this cannot be done either steadily, or with any satisfaction, unless the mind does inwardly comply with, and delight in, the dictates of virtue ; and that could not be effected, except a man's nature was internally regenerated and changed by a higher principle. Till that came about, corrupt nature would be strong, and philosophy but feeble ; es-

pecially when it struggled with such appetites or passions as were much kindled, or deeply rooted in the constitution of one's body.

This, he said, sounded to him like enthusiasm or canting. He had no notion of it, and so could not understand it. He comprehended the dictates of reason and philosophy, in which, as the mind became much conversant, there would soon follow, as he believed, a greater easiness in obeying its precepts.

I told him, on the other hand, that all his speculations of philosophy would not serve him in any stead, to the reforming of his nature and life, till he applied himself to God for inward assistance. It was certain, that the impressions made in his reason governed him, as they were lively presented to him. But these are so apt to slip out of our memory, and we too apt to turn our thoughts from them; and sometimes the contrary impressions are so strong, that, let a man set up a reasoning in

his mind against them, he finds that celebrated saying of the poet,

Video meliora proboque ; deteriora sequor.

I see what is better, and approve it ; but follow what is worse ;

to be all that philosophy will amount to. Whereas those, who upon such occasions apply themselves to God by earnest prayer, feel a disengagement from such impressions, and themselves endued with a power to resist them ; so that the bonds, which formerly held them, fall off.

This, he said, must be the effect of a heat in nature. It was only the strong diversion of the thoughts, that gave the seeming victory ; and did not doubt but, if one could turn to a problem in Euclid, or to write a copy of verses, it would have the same effect.

To this, I answered, that if such methods did only divert the thoughts, there might be some force in what he said ; but if they not only drove out such inclinations, but begat impressions contrary to

them, and brought men into a new disposition and habit of mind, then he must confess, there was somewhat more than a diversion in these changes, which were brought on our minds by true devotion. I added, that reason and experience were the things that determined our persuasions ; that, as experience without reason may be thought the delusion of our fancy, so reason without experience had not so convincing an operation ; but these two, meeting together, must needs give a man all the satisfaction he can desire.

He could not say it was unreasonable to believe, that the Supreme Being could make some thoughts stir in our minds with more or less force, as it pleased him ; especially the force of these motions being, for the most part, according to the impression that was made on our brains, which that power, which directed the whole frame of nature, could make grow deeper as it pleased. It was also reasonable to suppose God a being of such goodness, that he would give his assistance to such as desired

it. For though he might, upon some greater occasions, in an extraordinary manner, turn some people's minds; yet, since he had endued man with a faculty of reason, it is fit that men should employ that as far as they could, and beg his assistance, which certainly they can do.

All this seemed reasonable, and at least probable. Now good men,—who felt, upon their frequent applications to God in prayer, a freedom from those ill impressions, that formerly subdued them, an inward love to virtue and true goodness, and easiness and delight in all the parts of holiness, which was fed and cherished in them by a seriousness in prayer, and did languish as that went off,—had as real a perception of inward strength in their minds, that did rise and fall with true devotion, as they perceived the strength of their bodies increased or abated, according as they had or wanted good nourishment.

After many discourses upon this subject, he still continued to think all was the effect of fancy. He said, that he under-

stood nothing of it ; but acknowledged, that he thought they were very happy, whose fancies were under the power of such impressions, since they had somewhat on which their thoughts rested and centered. But when I saw him in his last sickness, he then told me, he had another sense of what he had talked concerning prayer and inward assistances.

This subject led us to discourse of God, and of the notion of religion in general. He believed, there was a Supreme Being. He could not think, the world was made by chance ; and the regular course of nature seemed to demonstrate the eternal power of its author. This, he said, he could never shake off ; but when he came to explain his notion of the Deity, he said, he looked upon it as a vast power, that wrought every thing by the necessity of its nature ; and thought that God had none of those affections of love or hatred, which breed perturbation in us ; and consequently, could not see there was to be either reward or punishment. He thought our

conceptions of God were so low, that we had better not think much of him. And to love God seemed to him a presumptuous thing, and the heat of fanciful men.

Therefore he believed there should be no other religious worship, but a general celebration of that Being, in some short hymn. All the other parts of worship he esteemed the invention of priests, to make the world believe they had a secret of incensing and appeasing God as they pleased. In a word, he was neither persuaded, that there was a special providence about human affairs, nor that prayers were of much use, since that was to look on God as a weak being, that would be overcome with importunities. And for the state after death, he thought the soul did not dissolve at death, yet he doubted much of rewards or punishments ; the one he thought too high for us to attain by our slight services, and the other was too extreme to be inflicted for sin. This was the substance of his speculations about God and religion.

I told him his notion of God was so low, that the Supreme Being seemed to be nothing but nature. For if that being had no freedom or choice of its own actions, nor operated by wisdom and goodness, all those reasons, which led him to acknowledge a God, were contrary to this conceit. For if the order of the universe persuaded him to think there was a God, he must at the same time conceive him to be both wise and good, as well as powerful, since these all appeared equally in the creation : though his wisdom and goodness had ways of exerting themselves, that were far beyond our notions or measures.

If God was wise and good, he would naturally love and be pleased with those, that resembled him in these perfections, and dislike those, that were opposite to him. Every rational being naturally loves itself, and is delighted in others like itself, and averse from what is not so. Truth is a rational nature, acting in conformity to itself in all things, and goodness is an incli-

nation to promote the happiness of other beings. So truth and goodness were the essential perfections of every reasonable being, and certainly most eminently in the Deity. Nor does his mercy or love raise passion or perturbation in him ; for we feel that to be a weakness in ourselves, which indeed only flows from our want of power or skill to do what we wish or desire.

It is also reasonable to believe, that God would assist the endeavours of the good with some helps suitable to their nature. And it could not be imagined, that those, who imitated him, should not be especially favoured by him ; and therefore since this did not fully appear in this state, it was most reasonable to think it should in another, where the reward shall be, an admission into a more perfect state of conformity to God, with the felicity that follows it ; and the punishment shall be, a total exclusion from him, with all the horror and darkness that must follow.

These seemed to be the natural results of such several courses of life, as well as

the effects of divine justice, rewarding or punishing. For since he believed the soul had a distinct substance, separated from the body, upon its dissolution, there was no reason to think it passed into a state of utter oblivion of what it had been in formerly. But that, as the reflections on the good or evil it had done, must raise joy or horror in it ; so those good or ill dispositions accompanying the departed souls, they must either rise up to a higher perfection, or sink to a more depraved and miserable state.

In this life, variety of affairs and objects do much cool and divert our minds ; and are, on the one hand, often great temptations to the good, and give the bad some ease in their trouble ; but in a state wherein the soul shall be separated from sensible things, and employed in a more quick and sublime way of operation, this must very much exalt the joys and improvements of the good, and as much heighten the horror and rage of the wicked.

So that it seemed a vain thing to pretend to believe in a Supreme Being, that is wise and good as well as great, and not think a discrimination will be made between the good and the bad, which it is manifest is not fully done in this life.

As for the government of the world, if we believe the Supreme Power made it, there is no reason to think he does not govern it ; for all that we can fancy against it is the distraction which that infinite variety of second causes, and the care of their concernments, must give to the first, if it inspects them all. But as, among men, those of weaker capacities are wholly taken up with some one thing, whereas those of more enlarged powers can, without distraction, have many things within their care ; as the eye can at one view receive a great variety of objects, in that narrow compass, without confusion ; so, if we conceive the divine understanding to be as far above ours, as his power of creating and framing the whole universe is above our limited ac-

tivity, we will no more think the government of the world a distraction to him. And if we have once overcome this prejudice, we shall be ready to acknowledge a providence directing all affairs ; a care well becoming the great Creator.

As for worshipping him, if we can imagine our worship is a thing that adds to his happiness, or gives him such a fond pleasure as weak people have to hear themselves commended ; or that our repeated addresses do overcome him, through our mere importunity, we have certainly very unworthy thoughts of him. The true end of worship comes within another consideration, which is this : a man is never entirely reformed, till a new principle governs his thoughts : nothing makes a principle so strong, as deep and frequent meditations of God, whose nature, though it be far above our comprehension, yet whose goodness and wisdom are such perfections as fall within our imagination. And he, that thinks often

of God, and considers him as governing the world, and as ever observing all his actions, will feel a very sensible effect of such meditations, as they grow more lively and frequent with him ; so the end of religious worship, either publick or private, is to make the apprehensions of God have deeper root and a stronger influence on us. The frequent returns of these are necessary, lest, if we allow of too long intervals between them, these impressions may grow feeble, and other suggestions may come in their room. And the returns of prayer are not to be considered as favours extorted by mere importunity, but as rewards conferred on men so well disposed and prepared for them, according to the promises that God had made for answering our prayers, thereby to engage and nourish a devout temper in us, which is the chief root of all true holiness and virtue.

It is true, we cannot have suitable notions of the divine essence ; for indeed we have no just idea of any essence whatsoev-

er. Since we commonly consider all things either by their outward figure or effects, and from thence make inferences what their nature must be ; so, though we cannot frame any perfect image in our minds of the Divinity, yet we may, from the discoveries God has made of himself, form such conceptions of him as may possess our minds with great reverence for him, and beget in us such a love of those perfections as to engage us to imitate them. For when we say we love, the meaning is, we love that being, God, who is holy, just, good, wise, and infinitely perfect. And loving these attributes in that object, will certainly carry us to desire them in ourselves. For whatever we love in another, we naturally, according to the degree of our love, endeavour to resemble. In sum, the loving and worshipping of God, though they are just and reasonable returns and expressions of the sense we have of his goodness to us, yet they are exacted of us not only as a tribute to God, but as a means to beget in us a conformity to his

nature, which is the chief end of pure and undefiled religion.

If some men have at several times found out inventions to corrupt this, and cheat the world, it is nothing but what occurs in every sort of employment to which men betake themselves. Mountebanks corrupt physick ; petifoggers have entangled the matters of property ; and all professions have been vitiated by the knaveries of a number of their calling.

With all these discourses he was not equally satisfied. He seemed convinced, that the impressions of God being much in men's minds, would be a powerful means to reform the world ; and did not seem determined against Providence. But for the next state, he thought it more likely, that the soul began anew, and that her sense of what she had done in this body, lying in the figures that are made in the brain, as soon as she dislodged, all these perished ; and that the soul went into some other state to begin a new course.

But I said upon this head, that this was at best a conjecture raised in him by his fancy, for he could give no reason to prove it was true. Nor was all the remembrance our souls had of past things, seated in some material figures lodged in the brain ; though it could not be denied but that a great deal of it lay in the brain. That we have many abstracted notions and ideas of immaterial things, which depend not on bodily figures. Some sins, such as falsehood and ill-nature, were seated in the mind, as lust and appetite were in the body ; and as the whole body was the receptacle of the soul, and the eyes and the ears were the organs of seeing and hearing, so was the brain the seat of memory. Yet the power and faculty of memory, as well as of seeing and hearing, lay in the mind ; and so it was no inconceivable thing that either the soul, by its own strength, or by the means of some subtiler organs, which might be fit-

ted for it in another state, should still remember as well as think.

But indeed we know so little of the nature of our souls, that it is a vain thing for us to raise an hypothesis out of the conjectures we have about it, or to reject one, because of some difficulties that occur to us ; since it is as hard to understand how we remember things now, as how we shall do it in another state ; only we are sure we do it now, and so we shall be then when we do it.

When I pressed him with the secret joys a good man felt, particularly as he drew near death, and the horrors of ill men, especially at that time ; he was willing to ascribe these to the impressions they had received from their education. But he often confessed that, whether the business of religion was true or not, he thought those who had the persuasions of it, and lived so that they had quiet in their consciences, and believed God governed the world, and acquiesced in his providence, and had the hope of an endless blessedness in another

state, were the happiest men in the world : and said, he would give all he was master of, to be under those persuasions, and to have the supports and joys that must needs flow from them.

I told him, the main root of all corruptions in men's principles was their ill life ; which, as it darkened their minds, and disabled them from discerning better things, so it made it necessary for them to seek out such opinions as might give them ease from those clamours, that would otherwise have been raised in them. He did not deny, but that after the doing of some things, he felt great and severe challenges within himself : but he said, he felt not these after some others, which I should perhaps call far greater sins, than those that affected him more sensibly. This, I said, might flow from the disorders he had cast himself into, which had corrupted his judgment and vitiated his taste of things ; and by his long continuance in, and frequent repeating of, some immoralities, he had made them so familiar to him, that they had become, as it

were, natural : and then it was no wonder, if he had not so exact a sense of what was good or evil ; as a feverish man cannot judge of tastes.

He did acknowledge the whole system of religion, if believed, was a greater foundation of quiet, than any other thing whatsoever : for all the quiet he had in his mind, was, that he could not think so good a being as the Deity would make him miserable. I asked him, if, by the ill course of his life, he had brought so many diseases on his body, he could blame God for it ; or expect, that he should deliver him from them by a miracle. He confessed, there was no reason for that. I then urged, that if sin should cast the mind, by a natural effect, into endless horrors and agonies, which, being seated in a being not subject to death, it must last forever, unless some miraculous power interposed, could he accuse God for that, which was the effect of his own choice and ill life ?

He said, they were happy that believed, for it was not in every man's power.

And upon this we discoursed long about revealed religion. He said, he did not understand the business of inspiration ; he believed, the writers of the Scriptures had hearts, and honesty, and so wrote ; but could not comprehend how God should reveal his secrets to mankind. Why was not man made a creature more disposed for religion, and better illuminated ? He could not apprehend how there should be any corruption in the nature of man, or a lapse derived from Adam. God's communicating his mind to one man, was the putting it in his power to cheat the world. For prophecies and miracles, the world had always been full of strange stories ; for the boldness and cunning of the contrivers meeting with the simplicity and credulity of the people, things were easily received ; and being once received, passed down without contradiction. The incoherencies of style in the Scriptures, the odd transitions, the seeming contradictions, chiefly about the order of time, the cruelties enjoined on

the Israelites in destroying the Canaanites, circumcision, and many other rites of the Jewish worship, seemed to him unsuitable to the divine nature ; and the first three chapters of Genesis, he thought, could not be true, unless they were parables. This was the substance of what he excepted to revealed religion in general, and to the Old Testament in particular.

I answered to all this, that believing a thing upon the testimony of another in other matters, where there was no reason to suspect the testimony, chiefly where it was confirmed by other circumstances, was not only a reasonable thing, but was that on which all government and justice in the world depended ; since all courts of justice proceed from evidence, given by witnesses ; for the use of writings is but a thing more lately brought into the world.

So then, if the credibility of the thing, the innocence and disinterestedness of the witnesses, the number of them, and the most publick confirmations that could possibly be given, do concur to persuade us

of any matter of fact, it is a vain thing to say, because it is possible for so many men to agree in a lie, that therefore these have done it. In all other things a man gives his assent when the credibility is strong on the one side, and there appears nothing on the other side to balance it. So such numbers agreeing in the testimony of these miracles ; for instance, our Saviour's calling Lazarus out of the grave the fourth day after he was buried, and his own rising again after he was certainly dead ; if there had been ever so many impostures in the world, no man can, with reasonable colour, pretend this was one.

We find, both by the Jewish and Roman writers, that lived in that time, that our Saviour was crucified ; and that all his disciples and followers believed certainly that he rose again. They believed this upon the testimony of the apostles and of many hundreds who saw it, and died confirming it. They went about to persuade the world of it, with great zeal, though they knew they were to get nothing by it but re-

proach and sufferings : and by many wonders, which they wrought, they confirmed their testimony. Now to avoid all this, by saying it is possible this might be a contrivance, and to give no presumption to make it so much as probable that it was so, is, in plain English, to say, *We are resolved, let the evidence be what it will, we will not believe it.*

He said, if a man says he cannot believe, what help is there ? for he was not master of his own belief, and believing was at highest but a probable opinion.

To this I answered, that if a man will let a wanton conceit possess his fancy against these things, and never consider the evidence for religion on the other hand, but reject it upon a slight view of it, he ought not to say he cannot, but will not believe. And while a man lives an ill course of life, he is not fitly qualified to examine the matter aright. Let him grow calm and virtuous, and upon due application examine things fairly ; and then let him pronounce, according to his conscience, if,

to take it at its lowest, the reasons on the one hand are not much stronger, than they are on the other. For I found he was so possessed with the general conceit, that a mixture of knaves and fools had made all extraordinary things easily believed, that it carried him away to determine the matter, without so much as looking on the historical evidence for the truth of Christianity, which he had not inquired into, but had bent all his wit and study to the support of the other side.

As for that, that believing is at best but an opinion ; if the evidence be but probable, it is so ; but if it be such that, it cannot be questioned, it grows as certain as knowledge. For we are no less certain, that there is a great town called Constantinople, the seat of the Ottoman empire, than that there is another called London. We have as little doubt, that queen Elizabeth once reigned, as that king Charles now reigns in England. So that believing may

be as certain, and as little subject to doubting, as seeing or knowing.

There are two sorts of believing divine matters ; the one is wrought in us by our comparing all the evidences of matter of fact, for the confirmation of revealed religion, with the prophecies in the Scripture, where things were punctually predicted, some ages before their completion ; not in dark and doubtful words, uttered like oracles, that could bend to any event ; but in plain terms, as the foretelling that Cyrus by name should send the Jews back from the captivity, after the fixed period of seventy years ; the history of the Syrian and Egyptian kings so punctually foretold by Daniel ; and the prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, with many circumstances relating to it, made by our Saviour ; joining these to the excellent rule and design of the Scripture in matters of morality ; it is at least as reasonable to believe this, as any thing else in the world. Yet such a believing as this is only a general persuasion in

the mind, which has not that effect, till a man applies himself to the directions set down in the Scriptures ; which, upon such evidence, cannot be denied to be as reasonable, as for a man to follow the prescriptions of a learned physician, and when these rules are both good and easy, to submit to them for the recovery of his health ; and by following these, finds a power entering within him, that frees him from the slavery of his appetites and passions ; that exalts his mind above the accidents of life, and spreads an inward purity of heart, from which a serene and calm joy arises within him. And good men, by the efficacy these methods have upon them, and from the returns of their prayers, and other endeavours, grow assured that these things are true, and answerable to the promises they find registered in Scripture.

All this, he said, might be fancy.—But to this I answered, that as it would be unreasonable to tell a man that is abroad, and knows he is awake, that per-

haps he is in a dream, and in his bed, and only thinks he is abroad, or that as some go about in their sleep, that he may be asleep still ; so good and religious men know, though others may be abused by their fancies, that they are under no such deception ; and find they are neither hot nor enthusiastic, but under the power of calm and pure principles. All this, he said, he did not understand, and that it was to assert or beg the thing in question, which he could not comprehend.

As for the possibility of revelation, it was a vain thing to deny it : For as God gives us the sense of seeing material objects with our eyes, and opened in some a capacity of apprehending high and sublime things, of which other men seemed utterly incapable ; so it was a weak assertion, that God cannot awaken a power in some men's minds, to apprehend and know some things in such a manner that others are not capable of. This is not half so incredible to us as sight is to a blind man, who yet may be

convinced there is a strange power of seeing, that governs men, of which he finds himself deprived.

As for the capacity put into such men's hands to deceive the world, we are at the same time to consider, that besides the probity of their tempers, it cannot be thought but God can so forcibly bind up a man in some things, that it should not be in his power to deliver them otherwise than as he gives him in commission. Besides, the confirmation of miracles is a divine credential, to warrant such persons in what they deliver to the world ; which cannot be imagined can be joined to a lie ; since this were to put the omnipotence of God to attest that, which no honest man will do.

For the business of the fall of man, and other things of which we cannot perhaps give ourselves a perfect account, we, who cannot fathom the secrets of the counsel of God, act very unreasonably to take on us to reject an excellent system of good and holy rules, because we cannot satisfy ourselves

about some difficulties in them. Common experience tells us there is a great disorder in our natures, which is not easily rectified. All philosophers were sensible of it, and every man that designs to govern himself by reason, feels the struggle between it and nature. So that it is plain, there is a lapse of the high powers of the soul.

But why, said he, could not this be rectified by some plain rules given ; but men must come and shew a trick to persuade the world they speak to them in the name of God ? I answered, that religion being a design to recover and save mankind, was to be so opened as to awaken and work upon all sorts of people : and generally men of a simplicity of mind, were those, that were the fittest objects for God to shew his favour to. Therefore it was necessary, that messengers sent from heaven should appear with such alarming evidences as might awaken the world, and prepare them, by some astonishing signs, to listen to the doctrine they were to deliver.

Philosophy, that was only a matter of fine speculation, had few votaries. And as there was no authority in it to bind the world to believe its dictates, so they were only received by some of nobler and refined natures, who could apply themselves to and delight in such notions. But true religion was to be built upon a foundation, that should carry more weight on it ; and to have such convictions, as might not only reach those who were already disposed to receive them, but rouse up such as, without great and sensible excitation, would have otherwise slept on in their ill courses.

Upon this and some other occasions, I told him I saw the ill use he made of his wit, by which he slurred the gravest things with a slight dash of his fancy ; and the pleasure he found in such wanton expressions, as calling the doing of miracles, *the shewing of a trick*, did really keep him from examining them with that care, which such things required.

For the Old Testament, we are so remote from that time ; we have so little knowledge of the language, in which it was written ; have so imperfect an account of the history of those ages ; know nothing of their customs, forms of speech, and the several periods they might have, by which they reckoned their time ; that it is rather a wonder we should understand so much of it, than that many passages in it should be so dark to us. The chief use it has to us Christians is, that, from writings which the Jews acknowledge to be been divinely inspired, it is manifest the Messiah was promised, before the destruction of their temple ; which being done long ago, and these prophecies agreeing to our Saviour, and none other ; here is a great confirmation given to the gospel. But though many things in these books could not be understood by us, who lived above three thousand years after the chief of them were written, it is no such extraordinary matter.

For that of the destruction of the Canaanites by the Israelites, it is to be considered, that if God had sent a plague among them all, that could not have been found fault with. If then God had a right to take away their lives, without injustice or cruelty, he had a right to appoint others to do it, as well as to execute it by a more immediate way. And the taking away people by the sword is a much gentler way of dying, than to be smitten with a plague or a famine. And for the children, that were innocent of their fathers' faults, God could in another state make that up to them. So all the difficulty is, why were the Israelites commanded to execute a thing of such barbarity? But this will not seem so hard, if we consider that this was to be no precedent for future times; since they did not do it but upon special warrant and command from Heaven, evidenced to to all the world by such mighty miracles, as did plainly shew, that they were particularly designed by God for the executioners of his

justice. And God, by employing them in so severe a service, intended to possess them with great horror of idolatry, which was punished in so extreme a manner.

For the rites of their religion, we can ill judge of them, except we perfectly understood the idolatries round about them, to which we find they were much inclined. So they were to be bent by other rites to an extreme aversion from them ; and yet, by the pomp of many of their ceremonies and sacrifices, great indulgences were given to a people naturally fond of a visible splendour in religious worship.

In all which, if we cannot descend to such satisfactory answers, in every particular, as a curious man could desire, it is no wonder. The long interval of time, and other accidents, have worn out those things, which were necessary to give us a clear light into the meaning of them.

And for the story of the creation, how far some things in it may be parabolical, and how far historical, has been much disputed ; there is nothing in it that may not

be historically true. For if it be acknowledged, that spirits can form voices in the air, for which we have as good authority as for any thing in history, then it is no wonder that Eve, being so lately created, might be deceived, and think a serpent spake to her, when the evil spirit framed the voice.

But in all these things I told him he was in the wrong way, when he examined the business of religion by some dark parts of Scripture. Then I desired him to consider the whole contexture of the Christian religion, the rules it gives, and the methods it prescribes. Nothing can conduce more to the peace, order, and happiness of the world, than to be governed by its rules. Nothing is more for the interests of every man in particular. The rules of sobriety, temperance, and moderation, were the best preservers of life, and, which was perhaps more, of health. Humility, contempt of the vanities of the world, and being well employed, raises a man's mind to a freedom from the follies and temptations, that haunted the greater part. Nothing was so gen-

erous and great as to supply the necessities of the poor, and to forgive injuries. Nothing raised and maintained a man's reputation so much, as to be exactly just and merciful, kind, charitable, and compassionate. Nothing opened the powers of a man's soul so much as a calm temper ; a serene mind, free of passion and disorder. Nothing made societies, families, and neighbourhoods so happy, as when these rules which the Gospel prescribes took place, *of doing as we would have others do to us, and loving our neighbour as ourselves.*

The Christian worship was also plain and simple ; suitable to so pure a doctrine. The ceremonies of it were few and significant ; as the admission to it by washing with water, and a memorial of our Saviour's death, in bread and wine ; the motives in it to persuade to this purity were strong—that God sees us, and will judge us for all our actions—that we shall be ever happy, or miserable, as we pass our lives here—the example of our Saviour's life, and the great expressions of his love in dying for us, are

mighty engagements to obey and imitate him—the plain way of expression used by our Saviour and his apostles, shews there was no artifice, where there was so much simplicity used—there were no secrets kept only among the priests, but every thing was open to all *Christians*—the rewards of holiness are not entirely put over to another state, but good men are specially blest with peace in their consciences, great joy in the confidence they have of the love of God, and of seeing him forever : And often a single course of blessings follows them in their whole lives. But if, at other times, calamities fell on them, these were so much mitigated by the patience they were taught, and by the inward assistances with which they were furnished, that even those crosses were converted into blessings.

I desired he would lay all these things together, and see what he could except to them, to make him think this was a contri-

vance. Interest appears in all human contrivances. Our Saviour plainly had none ; he avoided applause, withdrew himself from the offers of a crown ; he submitted to poverty and reproach, much contradiction in his life, and to a most ignominious and painful death.

His apostles had none neither ; they did not pretend either to power or wealth, but delivered a doctrine that must needs condemn them, if they ever made use of it. They declared their commission fully without reserve till other times ; they recorded their own weakness ; some of them wrought with their own hands ; and when they received the charities of their converts, it was not so much to supply their own necessities, as to distribute to others. They knew they were to suffer much for giving their testimonies to what they had seen and heard ; in which so many, in a thing so visible as Christ's resurrection and ascension, and the effusion of the Holy Ghost which he had promised, could not be de-

ceived. And they gave such publick confirmations of it, by the wonders they themselves wrought, that great multitudes were converted to a doctrine, which, besides the opposition it gave to lust and passion, was borne down and persecuted for three hundred years ; and yet its force was such, that it not only weathered out all those storms, but even grew, and spread vastly under them.

Pliny, about threescore years after, found their numbers great and their lives innocent. And even Lucian, amidst all his raillery, gives a high testimony to their charity and contempt of life, and the other virtues of the christians ; which is likewise more than once done by malice itself, Julian the apostate.

If a man will lay all this in one balance, and compare it with the few exceptions it brought to it, he will soon find how strong the one, and how slight the other are. Therefore it was an improper way, to begin at some cavils about some passages in

the New Testament, or the Old, and from thence to prepossess one's mind against the whole. The right method had been, first to consider the whole matter, and from so general a view to descend to more particular inquiries : Whereas they suffered their minds to be forestalled with prejudices, so that they never examined the matter impartially.

To the greatest part of this he seemed to assent, only he excepted to the belief of Mysteries in the christian religion ; which he thought no man could do, since it is not in a man's power to believe that which he cannot comprehend, and of which he can have no notion.

The believing of mysteries, he said, made way for all the jugglings of priests ; for they, getting the people under them in that point, set out to them what they pleased ; and giving it a hard name, and calling it a *mystery*, the people were tamed, and easily believed it.

The restraining a man from the use of

women, except one in the way of marriage, and denying the remedy of divorce, he thought unreasonable impositions on the freedom of mankind. And the business of the clergy, and their maintenance, with the belief of some authority and power conveyed in their orders, looked, as he thought, like a piece of contrivance. And why, said he, must a man tell me, I cannot be saved, unless I believe things against my reason, and then that I must pay him for telling me of them? These were all the exceptions, which at any time I heard from him to christianity. To which I made these answers.

For mysteries, it is plain, there is in every thing somewhat unaccountable.—How animals or men are formed in their mothers' wombs; how seeds grow in the earth; how the soul dwells in the body, and acts and moves it; how we retain the figures of so many words or things in our memories, and how we draw them out so easily and orderly in our thoughts or discourses; how sight and hearing are so

quick and distinct ; how we move, and how bodies were compounded and united.

These things, if we follow them into all the difficulties that we may raise about them, will appear every whit as unaccountable as any mystery of religion. And a blind or deaf man would judge sight or hearing as incredible, as any mystery may be judged by us ; for our reason is not equal to them. In the same rank, different degrees of age or capacity raise some far above others ; so that children cannot fathom the learning, nor weak persons the counsels of more illuminated minds. Therefore it was no wonder if we could not understand the divine essence. We cannot imagine how two such different natures as soul and body should so unite together, and be mutually affected with one another's concerns ; and how the soul has one principle of reason, by which it acts intellectually, and another of life, by which it joins to the body and acts vitally ; two principles so widely differing both in their nature and

operation, and yet united in one and the same person. There might be as many hard arguments brought against the possibility of these things, which yet every one knows to be true, from speculative notions, as against the mysteries mentioned in the Scriptures.

As that of the trinity ; that in one essence there are three different principles of operation, which, for want of terms fit to express them by, are called persons, and are called in the Scripture, *Father, Son,* and *Holy Ghost* ; and that the second of these did unite himself in a most intimate manner with the human nature of Jesus Christ ; and that the sufferings he underwent were accepted of God as a sacrifice for our sins ; who thereupon conferred on him a power of granting eternal life to all that submit to the terms on which he offers it : and that the matter of which our bodies once consisted, which may be as justly called the bodies we laid down at our deaths, as these can be said to be the bodies we formerly lived in, being refined and made

more spiritual, shall be reunited to our souls, and become a fit instrument for them in a more perfect state : and that God inwardly bends and moves our wills, by such impressions as he can make on our bodies and minds.

These, which are the chief mysteries of our religion, are neither so unreasonable, that any other objection lies against them, but this, that they agree not with our common notions ; nor so unaccountable, that somewhat like them cannot be assigned in other things, which are believed really to be, though the manner of them cannot be apprehended.

So this ought not to be any just objection to the submission of our reason to what we cannot so well conceive, provided our belief of it be well grounded. There have been too many niceties brought indeed rather to darken than explain these ; they have been defended by weak arguments, and illustrated by similes not always so very apt and pertinent. And new subtilties have been added, which

have rather perplexed than cleared them. All this cannot be denied. The opposition of hereticks anciently occasioned too much curiosity among the fathers ; which the school-men have wonderfully advanced of late times.

But if mysteries were received rather in the simplicity in which they are delivered in the Scriptures, than according to the descantings of fanciful men upon them, they would not appear much more incredible, than some of the common objects of sense and perception. And it is a needless fear, that, if some mysteries are acknowledged, that are plainly mentioned in the New Testament, it will then be in the power of the priests to add more at their pleasure. For it is an absurd inference, from our being bound to assent to some truths about the divine essence, of which the manner is not understood, to argue, that, therefore, in an object presented duly to our senses, such as bread and wine, we should be bound to believe against their testimony, that it is not what our senses

perceived it to be, but the whole flesh and blood of Christ; an entire body being in every crumb and drop of it. It is not indeed in a man's power to believe thus against his sense and reason, where the object is proportioned to them, and fitly applied, and the organs are under no indisposition or disorder.

It is certain, that no mystery is to be admitted, but upon very clear and express authorities from Scripture, which could not reasonably be understood in any other sense. And though a man can form no explicit notion of mystery, (for then it would be no longer a mystery) yet in general he may believe a thing to be, though he cannot give himself a particular account of the way of it; or rather, though he cannot answer some objections that lie against it. We know, we believe many such in human matters, which are more within our reach; and it is very unreasonable to say we may not do it in divine things, which are much more above our apprehensions.

For the severe restraint of the use of women, it is hard to deny that privilege to

Jesus Christ, as a lawgiver, to lay such restraints as all inferior legislators do ; who, when they find the liberties their subjects take prove hurtful to them, set such limits, and make such regulations, as they judge necessary and expedient. It cannot be said but the restraint of appetite is necessary in some instances ; and if it is necessary in these, perhaps other restraints are no less necessary to fortify and secure them. For if it be acknowledged, that men have a property in their wives and daughters, so that to defile the one, or corrupt the other, is an unjust and injurious thing ; it is certain, that except a man carefully govern his appetites, he will break through these restraints ; and therefore our Saviour, knowing that nothing could so effectually deliver the world from mischief and unrestrained appetite, as such a confinement, might very reasonably enjoin it. And in all such cases we are to balance the inconveniences on both hands, and where we find they are heaviest, we are to acknowledge the equity of the law. On the one hand, there is no prejudice but the restraint of appetite ; on

the other, are the mischiefs of being given up to pleasure, of running inordinately into it, of breaking the quiet of our own family at home, and of others abroad ; the engaging into much passion; the doing many false and impious things to compass what is desired, the waste of men's estates, time, and health. Now let any man judge, whether the prejudices of this side are not greater, than that single one on the other side, of being denied some pleasure ?

For polygamy, it is but reasonable, since women are concerned in the laws of marriage, that they should be considered as well as men. But in a state of polygamy they are under great misery and jealousy, and are indeed barbarously used. Man being also of a sociable nature, friendship and converse were among the primitive intendments of marriage, in which, as far as man may excel the wife in greatness of mind, and height of knowledge, the wife in some way makes that up with her affection and tender care : so that from both happily mixed, there arises a harmony which is to virtuous minds one of the greatest joys of

life.—But all this is gone in a state of polygamy, which occasions perpetual jarrings and jealousies. And the variety does but engage men to a freer range of pleasure, which is not to be put in the balance with the far greater mischiefs, that must follow the other course.

So that it is plain, our Saviour considered the nature of man, what it could bear, and what was fit for it, when he restrained us in these our liberties.

And for divorce, a power to break that bond would too much encourage married persons in the little quarrellings, that may arise between them, if it were in their power to depart one from another. For when they know that cannot be, and that they must live and die together, it does naturally incline them to lay down their resentments, and to endeavour to live as well together as they can.

So the law of the gospel being a law of love, designed to engage Christians to mutual love, it was fit that all such provisions should be made, as might advance and

maintain it ; and all such liberties be taken away, as are apt to enkindle and foment strife. This might, in some instances, produce situations which would be uneasy and hard enough ; but laws consider what falls out most commonly, and cannot provide for all particular cases. The best laws are in some instances very great grievances. But the advantages being balanced with the inconveniences, measures are to be taken accordingly.

Upon this whole matter I said, that pleasure stood in opposition to other considerations of greater weight, and so the decision was easy. And since our Saviour offers us so great rewards, it is but reasonable that he has a privilege of loading these promises with such conditions, as are not in themselves grateful to our natural inclinations : for all, that propose high rewards, have thereby a right to exact difficult performances.

To this he said, We are sure the terms are difficult, but are not so sure of the rewards. Upon this I told him, that we have the same assurance of the rewards, that we

have of the other parts of the Christian religion. We have the promises of God made to us by Christ, confirmed by many miracles. We have the earnestness of these in the quiet and peace which follow a good conscience ; and in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, who hath promised to raise us up. So that the reward is sufficiently assured to us : and there is no reason it should be given to us, before the conditions are performed, on which the promises are made. It is but reasonable we should trust God, and do our duty, *in hopes of that eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, hath promised.*

The difficulties are not so great, as those which sometimes the most common concerns of life bring upon us. The learning of some trades or sciences, the governing of our health or affairs, bring us often under as great straits. So that it ought to be no just prejudice, that there are some things in religion that are uneasy, since this is rather the effect of our corrupt natures, which are farther depraved by vicious hab-

its, and can hardly turn to any new course of life, without some pain, than of the dictates of Christianity, which are in themselves just and reasonable, and will be easy to us when renewed, and in a good measure restored to our primitive integrity.

As for the exceptions he had to the maintenance of the clergy, and the authority to which they pretended ; if they stretched their designs too far, the gospel did plainly reprove them for it ; so that it was very suitable to that church, which was so grossly faulty this way, as to take the Scriptures out of the hands of the people, since the Scriptures so manifestly disclaim all such practices. The priests of the true Christian religion have no secrets among them, which the world must not know, but are only an order of men dedicated to God, to attend on sacred things, who ought to be holy in a more peculiar manner, since they are to handle the things of God. It was necessary that such persons should have a due esteem paid them, and a fit maintenance appointed for them, that so they might be preserved from the contempt that follows

poverty, and the distractions which the providing against it might otherwise involve them in. And as in the order of the world, it was necessary for the support of magistracy and government, and for preserving its esteem, that some state be used (though it is a happiness when great men have philosophical minds, to despise the pageantry of it ;) so the plentiful supply of the clergy, if well used and applied by them, will certainly turn to the advantage of religion. And if some men, either through ambition or covetousness, used indirect means or servile compliances to aspire to such dignities, and being possessed of them, applied their wealth either to luxury or vain pomp, or made great fortunes out of it for their families ; these were personal failings, in which the doctrine of Christ was not concerned.

He upon that told me plainly, there was nothing that gave him, and many others, a more secret encouragement in their ill ways, than that those, who pretended to believe, lived so, that they could not be thought to be in earnest, when they said it. For he

was sure, religion was either a mere contrivance, or the most important thing that could be ; so that if he once believed, he would set himself in great earnest to live suitably to it. The aspirings, that he had observed at court, of some of the clergy, with the servile ways they took to attain to preferment ; and the animosities, among those of several parties, about trifles, made him often think they suspected the things were not true, which in their sermons and discourses they so earnestly recommended.

Of this he had gathered many instances. I knew some of them were mistakes and calumnies ; yet I could not deny but something of them might be true. And I publish this the more freely, to put all that pretend to religion, chiefly those that are dedicated to holy functions, in mind of the great obligation that lies on them to live suitably to their profession ; since, otherwise, a great deal of the irreligion and atheism, that is among us, may too justly be charged on them : for wicked men are delighted out of measure, when they discover ill things in them, and conclude from thence, not only

that they are hypocrites, but that religion itself is a cheat.

But I said to him on this head, that though no good man could continue in the practice of any known sin, yet such might, by the violence or surprise of temptation, to which they are liable as much as others, be of a sudden overcome to do an ill thing, to their great grief all their life after. And then it was a very unjust inference, upon some few failings, to conclude that such men do not believe themselves. But how bad soever many are, it cannot be denied but that there are also many, both of the clergy and laity, who give great and real demonstrations of the power which religion has over them ; in their contempt of the world, the strictness of their lives, their readiness to forgive injuries, to relieve the poor, and to do good on all occasions. And yet even these may have their failings, either in such things wherein their constitutions are weak, or their temptations strong and sudden. And in all such cases we are to judge of men, rather by the course of their lives, than by the errors that they,

through infirmity or surprise, may have slept into.

These were the chief heads we discoursed on ; and as far as I can remember, I have faithfully repeated the substance of our arguments. I have not concealed the strongest things he said to me ; but though I have not enlarged on all the excursions of his wit in setting them off, yet I have given them their full strength, as he expressed them ; and, as far as I could recollect, have used his own words. So that I am afraid some may censure me for setting down these things so largely, which impious men may make an ill use of, and gather together to encourage and defend themselves in their vices. But if they will compare them with the answers made to them, and the sense that, so great and refined a wit had of them afterwards, I hope they may, through the blessing of God, be not altogether ineffectual.

The issue of all our discourse was this : —He told me, he saw vice and impiety were as contrary to human society, as wild beasts let loose would be ; and therefore he

firmly resolved to change the whole method of his life; to become strictly just and true, to be chaste and temperate, to forbear swearing and irreligious discourse, to worship and pray to his Maker. And that though he was not arrived at a full persuasion of Christianity, he would never employ his wit any more to run it down, or to corrupt others.

Of which I have since a further assurance from a person of quality, who conversed much with him, the last year of his life; to whom he would often say, that he was happy if he did believe, and that he would never endeavour to draw him from it.

To all this I answered, that a virtuous life would be very uneasy to him, unless vicious inclinations were removed. It would otherwise be a perpetual constraint. Nor could it be effected without an inward principle to change him; and that was only to be had by applying himself to God for it in frequent and earnest prayers. And I was sure if his mind were once cleared of these disorders, and cured of those distem-

pers, which vice brought on it, so great an understanding would soon see through all all those flights of wit, that do feed atheism and irreligion ; which have a false glittering in them, that dazzles some weak-sighted minds, who have not capacity enough to penetrate further than the surfaces of things ; and so they stick in these toils, which the strength of his mind would soon break through, if it were once freed from those things that depressed and darkened it.

At this pass he was, when he went from London, about the beginning of April. He had not been long in the country, when he thought he was so well, that, being to go to his estate in Somersetshire, he rode thither post. This heat and violent motion did so inflame an ulcer, that was in his bladder, that it raised a very great pain in those parts. Yet he with much difficulty came back by coach to the lodge at Woodstock-Park. He was then wounded both in body and mind. He understood physick and his own constitution and distemper so well, that he concluded he could hardly

recover ; for the ulcer broke, and vast quantities of purulent matter passed with his urine. But now the hand of God touched him ; and as he told me, it was not only a dark melancholy over his mind, such as he had formerly felt, but a most penetrating and cutting sorrow : So that though in his body he suffered extreme pain for some weeks, yet the agonies of his mind sometimes swallowed up the felt in sense of what he the body.

He told me and gave it me in charge, to tell it to one for whom he was much concerned, that though there were nothing to come after this life, yet all the pleasures he had ever known in sin, were not worth that torture he had felt in his mind. He considered he had not only neglected and dishonoured, but had openly defied his Maker, and had drawn many many others into the like impieties. So that he looked on himself as one that was in great danger of being damned. He then set himself wholly to turn to God unfeignedly, and to do all that was possible in that little remainder of his life which was before him, to re-

deem those great portions of it, that he formerly so illy employed.

The minister, that attended constantly on him, was that good and worthy man, Mr. Parsons, his mother's chaplain, who hath since his death preached, according to the directions he received from him, his funeral sermon ; in which there are so many remarkable passages, that I shall refer my reader to them, and will repeat none of them here, that I may not thereby lessen his desire to edify himself by that excellent discourse, which has given so great and so general satisfaction to all good and judicious readers. I shall speak cursorily of every thing, but that which I had immediately from himself. He was visited every week of his sickness by his diocesan, that truly primitive prelate, the lord bishop of Oxford, Dr. Fell, who, though he lived six miles from him, yet looked on this as so important a piece of his pastoral care, that he went often to him ; and treated him with that decent plainness and freedom,

which is so natural to him ; and took care also that he might not, on terms more easy than safe, be at peace with himself. Dr. Marshall, the learned and worthy rector of Lincoln College in Oxford, being the minister of the parish, was also frequently with him ; and by these helps he was so directed and supported, that he might not on the one hand satisfy himself with too superficial a repentance, nor on the other hand be out of measure oppressed with a sorrow without hope.

As soon as I heard he was ill, but yet in such a condition that I might write to him, I wrote a letter to the best purpose I could. He ordered one that was then with him, to assure me it was very welcome to him : but not satisfied with that, he sent me an answer, which, as the countess of Rochester, his mother, told me, he dictate devery word, and then signed it.

I was once unwilling to have published it because of a compliment in it to myself, far above my merit, and not very well suit-

ing with his condition. But the sense he expresses in it of the change then wrought on him hath, upon second thoughts, prevailed with me to publish it, leaving out what concerns myself.

WOODSTOCK PARK, OXFORDSHIRE,

JUNE 25, 1680.

Most honoured Dr. Burnett,

My spirits and body decay so equally together, that I shall write you a letter weak as I am in person. I begin to value churchmen above all men in the world, &c. If God be yet pleased to spare me longer in this world, I hope in your conversation to be exalted to that degree of piety, that the world may see how much I abhor what I so long loved, and how much I glory in repentance, and in God's service. Bestow your prayers upon me, that God would spare me (if it be his good will) to shew a true repentance and amendment of life for the time to come: or else, if the Lord pleaseth to put an end to my worldly being now, that he would mercifully accept of my death-bed repentance, and perform that promise that he hath been pleased to make,

that at what time soever a sinner doth repent, he would receive him. Put up these prayers, most dear Doctor, to Almighty God for your most obedient and languishing servant, . ROCHESTER.

He told me when I saw him, that he hoped I would come to him upon that general insinuation of the desire he had of my company ; and he was loth to write more plainly ; not knowing whether I could easily spare so much time. I told him, that on the other hand, I looked on it as a presumption to come so far, when he was in such excellent hands ; and though perhaps the freedom formerly between us, might have excused it with those to whom it was known, yet it might have the appearance of much vanity, to such as were strangers to it ; so that till I received his letter, I did not think it convenient to come to him ; and then not hearing that there was any danger of a sudden change, I delayed going to him till the twentieth of July.

At my coming to his house, an accident fell out not worth mentioning, but that some

have made a story of it. His servant, being a Frenchman, carried up my name wrong, so that he had mistook it for another, who had sent to him that he would undertake his cure, and he being resolved not to meddle with him; did not care to see him. This mistake lasted some hours, with which I was the better contented, because he was not then in such a condition, that my being about him could have been of any use to him; for that night was like to have been his last. He had a convulsion fit, and raved; but opiates being given him, after some hours' rest, his raving left him so entirely, that it never again returned to him.

I cannot easily express the transport he was in, when he awoke and saw me by him. He broke out in the tenderest expressions concerning my kindness in coming so far to see *such an one*, using terms of great abhorrence concerning himself, which I forbear to relate. He told me, as his strength served him at several short seasons, for he was then so low, that he could not hold up discourse long at once, what sense he had of his past life; what sad apprehensions for

having so offended his Maker, and dishonoured his Redeemer; what horrors he had gone through, and how much his mind was turned to call on God, and on his crucified Saviour. So that he hoped he should obtain mercy, for he believed he had sincerely repented; and had now a calm in his mind, after that storm that he had been in for some weeks.

He had strong apprehensions and persuasions of his admittance to heaven; of which he spake once not without some extraordinary emotion. It was indeed the only time he spake with any great warmth to me; for his spirits were then low, and so far spent, that though those about him told me he had expressed formerly great fervour in his devotions, yet nature was so much sunk, that these were in a great measure fallen off.

But he made me pray often with him: and spoke of his conversion to God as a thing now grown up in him to a settled and calm serenity. He was very anxious to know my opinion of a death-bed repentance. I told him, that before I gave any resolu-

tion in that, it would be convenient that I should be acquainted more particularly with the circumstances and progress of his repentance.

Upon this he satisfied me in many particulars. He said, he was now persuaded both of the truth of Christianity, and of the power of inward grace, of which he gave me this strange account. He said, Mr. Parsons, in order to his conviction, read to him the 53d chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, and compared that with the history of our Saviour's passion, that he might there see a prophecy concerning it, written many ages before it was done; which the Jews that blasphemed Jesus Christ still kept in their hands, as a book divinely inspired. He said to me, that as he heard it read, he felt an inward force upon him, which did so enlighten his mind and convince him, that he could resist it no longer: for the words had an authority, which did shoot like rays or beams in his mind; so that he was not only convinced by the reasonings he had about it, which satisfied his understanding, but by a power which did so ef-

fectually constrain him, that he did ever after as firmly believe in his Saviour, as if he had seen him in the clouds.

He had it read so often to him, that he had got it by heart: and went through a great part of it in discourse with me, with a sort of heavenly pleasure, giving me his reflections on it.—Some few I remember: *Who hath believed our report?* verse 1. Here, he said, was foretold the opposition the gospel has to meet with from such wretches as he was. *He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him,* verse 2. On this he said, the meanness of his appearance and person has made vain and foolish people disparage him, because he came not in such a fool's coat as they delight in.

What he said on the other parts I do not well remember; and indeed I was so affected with what he said then to me, that the general transport I was under during the whole discourse, made me less capable to remember these particulars, as I wish I had done.

He told me, that he had thereupon received the sacrament with great satisfaction, and that was increased by the pleasure he had in his lady's receiving it with him ; who had been for some years misled into the communion of the church of Rome, and he himself had been not a little instrumental in procuring it, as he freely acknowledged. So that it was one of the most joyful things that befel him in his sickness, that he had seen that mischief removed, in which he had so great a hand.

And during his whole sickness, he expressed so much tenderness and true kindness to his lady, that, as it easily defaced the remembrance of every thing wherein he had been in fault formerly, so it drew from her the most passionate care and concern for him that was possible ; which indeed deserves a higher character, than is decent to give of a person yet alive.—But I shall confine myself to the dead.

He told me, he had overcome all his resentment to all the world ; so that he bore ill will to no person, nor hated any upon personal accounts. He had given a state

of his debts, and had ordered to pay them all, as far as his estate that was not settled could go ; and was confident, that if all that was owing to him were paid to his executors, his creditors would be all satisfied.

He said, he found his mind now possessed with another sense of things, than ever he had formerly. He did not repine under all his pain, and in one of the sharpest fits he was under while I was with him, he said, he did willingly submit ; and, looking up to heaven, said, God's holy will be done, I bless him for all he does for me. He knew he could never be so well, that life could be comfortable to him. He was confident he should be happy, if he died ; but he feared, if he lived, he might relapse. And then, said he to me, in what a condition shall I be, if I relapse after all this ! But, he said, he trusted in the grace and goodness of God, and was resolved to avoid all those temptations, that course of life and company, that was likely to ensnare him : and he desired to live on no other account, but that he might by the change of his manners

some way take off the high scandal his former behaviour had given. All these things at several times I had from him, besides some messages, which very well became a dying penitent to some of his former friends, and a charge to publish any thing concerning him, that might tend to reclaim others. Praying God, that as his life had done much hurt, so his death might do some good.

Having understood all these things from him, and being pressed to give him my opinion plainly about his eternal state ; I told him, that though the promises of the gospel did all depend upon a real change of the heart and life, as the indispensable condition upon which they were made ; and that it was scarce possible to know certainly whether our hearts are changed, unless it appeared in our lives ; and the repentance of most dying men, being like the howlings of condemned prisoners for pardon, which flowed from no sense of their crimes, but from the horror of approaching death ; there was little reason to encourage any to hope much from such sorrowing ; yet cer-

tainly, if the mind of a sinner even on a death-bed be truly renewed and turned to God, so great is his mercy that he will receive him, even in that extremity.

He was sure his mind was entirely turned, and though horror had given him his first awakening, yet that was now grown up into a settled faith and conversion.

There is but one prejudice lies against all this, to defeat the good ends of Divine Providence by it upon others, as well as upon himself; and that is, it was a part of his disease, and that the lowness of his spirits made such an alteration in him, that he was not what he had formerly been: and this some have carried so far as to say, that he died mad. These reports are raised by those, who are unwilling that the last thoughts or words of a person, every way so extraordinary, should have any effect either on themselves or others. And it is to be feared, that some may have so seared their consciences, and exceeded the common measures of sin and infidelity, that neither this testimony, nor one coming from

the dead, would signify much towards their conviction.

That this lord was either mad or stupid, is a thing so notoriously untrue, that it is the greatest impudence for any that were about him, to report it ; and a very unreasonable credulity in others to believe it. All the while I was with him, after he had slept out the disorders of the fit, he was not only without ravings, but had a clearness in his thoughts, in his memory, in his reflections on things and persons, far beyond what I ever saw in a person so low in his strength. He was not able to hold out in discourse, for his spirits failed ; but once for half an hour, and often for a quarter of an hour, after he awaked, he had a vivacity in his discourse that was extraordinary, and in all things like himself.

He called often for his children, his son, the now earl of *Rochester*, and his three daughters, and spake to them with a sense and feeling that cannot be expressed in writing.

He called me once to look on them all, and said, See how good God has been to

me, in giving me so many blessings, and I have carried myself to him like an ungracious and an unthankful dog.

He once talked a great deal to me of publick affairs, and of many persons and things, with the same clearness of thought and expression, that he had ever done before. So that by no sign but his weakness of body, and giving over discourse so soon, could I perceive a difference between what his parts formerly were, and what they were then.

And that wherein the presence of his mind appeared most, was in the total change of an ill habit grown so much upon him, that he could hardly govern himself (when he was any way heated) three minutes without falling into it ; I mean swearing.

He had acknowledged to me the former winter, that he abhorred it as a base and indecent thing, and had set himself much to break it off : but he confessed that he was so much overpowered by that ill custom, that he could not speak with

any warmth without repeated oaths, which, upon any sort of provocation, came almost natural from him. But in his last remorse this did so sensibly affect him, that by a resolute and constant watchfulness, the habit of it was perfectly mastered ; so that upon the returns of pain, which were very severe and frequent upon him, the last day I was with him, or upon such displeasures as people sick or in pain are apt to take of a sudden at those about them ; on all these occasions, he never swore an oath all the while I was there.

Once he was offended with the delay of one that he thought made not haste enough, with somewhat he called for, and said in a little heat, *that d—d fellow*. Soon after, I told him, I was glad to find his style so reformed, and that he had so entirely overcome that ill habit of swearing ; only that word of calling any d—d, which had returned upon him, was not decent.

His answer was, Oh, that language of fiends, which was so familiar to me, hangs yet about me : sure none has deserved more to be damned, than I have done.—

And after he had humbly asked God pardon for it, he desired me to call the person to him, that he might ask his forgiveness ; but I told him that was needless ; for he had said it of one that did not hear it, and so could not be offended by it.

In this disposition of mind did he continue all the while I was with him, four days together ; he was then brought so low that all hope of recovery was gone. Much purulent matter came from him with his urine, which he passed always with some pain ; but one day with inexpressible torment. Yet he bore it decently, without breaking out into repinings or impatient complaints. He imagined he had a stone in his passage, but it being searched none was found.

The whole substance of his body was drained by the ulcer, and nothing was left but skin and bone ; and by lying much on his back, the parts there began to mortify. But he had been formerly so low, that he seemed as much past all hopes of life as now ; which made him one morning, after a full and sweet night's rest, procured by

laudanum given him without his knowledge, to fancy it was an effort of nature, and to begin to entertain some hopes of recovery : for he said, he felt himself perfectly well, and that he had nothing ailing him but an extreme weakness, which might go off in time ; and then he entertained me with a scheme he had laid down for the rest of his life, how retired, how strict and how studious he intended to be. But this was soon over, for he quickly felt that it was only the effect of a good sleep, and that he was still in a very desperate state.

I thought to have left him on Friday ; but, not without some passion, he desired me to stay that day. There appeared no symptom of present death ; and a worthy physician then with him told me, that though he was so low that an accident might carry him away on a sudden ; yet without that, he thought he might live yet some weeks.

So on Saturday, at four o'clock in the morning, I left him, being the 24th of July. But I durst not take leave of him ; for he had expressed so great an unwillingness to

part with me the day before, that if I had not presently yielded to one day's stay, it was like to have given him some trouble ; therefore I thought it better to leave him without any formality.

Some hours after he asked for me ; and when it was told him I was gone, he seemed to be troubled, and said, Has my friend left me ? then I shall die shortly. After that, he spake but once or twice till he died. He lay much silent. Once they heard him pray very devoutly. And on Monday, about two o'clock in the morning, he died without any convulsion, or so much as a groan.

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CONCLUSION.

THUS he lived, and thus he died, in the three and thirtieth year of his age. Nature had fitted him for great things, and his knowledge and observation qualified him to have been one of the most extraordinary men not only of his nation, but of the age he lived in ; and I do verily believe, that if God had thought fit to have continued him

longer is the world, he had been the wonder and delight of all that knew him.

But the infinitely wise God knew better what was fit for him, and what the age deserved. For men who have so cast off all sense of God and religion, deserve not so signal a blessing, as the example and conviction which the rest of his life might have given them.

And I am apt to think that the divine goodness took pity on him, and seeing the sincerity of his repentance, would try and venture him no more in circumstances of temptation, perhaps too hard for human frailty.

Now he is at rest, and I am very confident enjoys the fruit of his late, but sincere repentance. But such as live, and still go on in their sins and impieties, and will not be awakened neither by this, nor the other alarms that are about their ears, are, it seems, given up by God to a judicial hardness and impenitency.

Here is a publick instance of one who lived on their side, but could not die on it : and though none of all our libertines under-

stood better than he, the secret mysteries of sin, had more studied every thing that could support a man in it, and had more resisted all external means of conviction than he had done ; yet, when the hand of God inwardly touched him, he could no longer kick against those pricks, but humbled himself under that mighty hand ; and, as he used often to say in his prayers, he who had so often denied him, found then no other shelter, but his mercies and compassions.

I have written this account with all the tenderness and caution I could use ; and in whatsoever I may have failed, I have been strict in the truth of what I have related, remembering that of Job, *Will ye lie for God ?*

Religion has strength and evidence enough in itself, and needs no support from lies and made stories. I do not pretend to have given the formal words that he said, though I have done that, where I could remember them. But I have written this with the same sincerity, that I would have done, had I known I had been to die immediately after I had finished it.

I did not take notes of our discourses last winter after we parted ; so I may perhaps, in the setting out of my answers to him, have enlarged on several things both more fully and more regularly, than I could say them in such free discourses as we had. I am not so sure of all I set down as said by me, as I am of all said by him to me. But yet the substance of the greatest part, even of that, is the same.

It remains that I humbly and earnestly beseech all that shall take this book in their hands, that they will consider it entirely, and not wrest some parts to an ill intention. God, the searcher of hearts, knows with what fidelity I have written it. But if any will drink up only the poison that may be in it, without taking also the antidote here given to those ill principles, or considering the sense that this great person had of them when he reflected seriously on them ; and will rather confirm themselves in their ill ways, by the scruples and objections which I set down, than be edified by the other parts of it ; as I will look on it as a great infelicity, that I should have said any thing

that may strengthen them in their impieties, so the sincerity of my intentions will, I doubt not, excuse me at his hands to whom I offer this small service.

I have now performed, in the best manner I could, what was left on me by this noble lord, and have done with the part of an historian. I shall in the next place say somewhat as a divine. So extraordinary a text does almost force a sermon, though it is plain enough itself; and speaks with so loud a voice, that those who are not awakened by it, will perhaps consider nothing that I can say.

If our libertines will become so far sober as to examine their former course of life, with that disengagement and impartiality, which they must acknowledge a wise man ought to use in things of greatest consequence, and balance the account of what they have got by their debaucheries, with the mischiefs they have brought on themselves and others by them, they will soon see what a mad bargain they have made.

Some diversion, mirth, and pleasure is all they can promise themselves ; but to obtain this, how many evils are they to suffer ! How many have wasted their strength, brought many diseases on their bodies, and precipitated their age in the pursuit of those things ? And as they bring old age early on themselves, so it becomes a miserable state of life to the greatest part of them ; gouts, stranguries, and other infirmities, being severe reckonings for their past follies ; not to mention the more loathsome diseases, with their no less troublesome cures, which they must often go through, who deliver themselves up to forbidden pleasure.

Many are disfigured beside, with the marks of their intemperance and lewdness ; and, which is yet sadder, an infection is derived oftentimes on their innocent, but unhappy issue, who being descended from so vitiated an original, suffer for their excesses.

Their fortunes are profusely wasted both by their neglect of their affairs, (they being so far buried in vice, that they cannot employ either their time or spirits, so

much exhausted by intemperance, to consider them) and by that prodigal expense which their lusts put them upon.

They suffer no less in their credit, the chief mean to recover an entangled estate ; for that irregular expense forceth them to so many mean shifts, makes them so often false to all promises and resolutions, that they must needs feel how much they have lost, that which a gentleman and men of ingenuous tempers do sometimes prefer even to life itself, their honour and reputation.

Nor do they suffer less in the nobler powers of their minds, which, by a long course of such dissolute practices, come to sink and degenerate so far, that not a few, whose first blossoms gave the most promising hopes, have so withered as to become incapable of great and generous undertakings, and to be disabled to every thing but to wallow like swine in the filth of sensuality, their spirits being dissipated, and their minds so numbed, as to be wholly unfit for business, and even indisposed to think.

That this dear price should be paid for a little wild mirth, or gross and corporeal

pleasure, is a thing of such unparalleled folly, that if there were not too many such instances before us, it might seem incredible.

To all this we must add the horrors that their ill actions raise in them, and the hard shifts they are put to, to stave off these, either by being perpetually drunk or mad, or by an habitual disuse of thinking and reflecting on their actions, and (if these arts will not perfectly quiet them) by taking sanctuary in such atheistical principles as may at least mitigate the sourness of their thoughts, though they cannot absolutely settle their minds.

If the state of mankind and human societies are considered, what mischiefs can be equal to those which follow these courses!

Such persons are a plague wherever they come; they can neither be trusted nor loved, having cast off both truth and goodness, which procure confidence and attract love. They corrupt some by their ill practices, and do irreparable injuries to the rest. They run great hazards, and put themselves to much trouble, and all this to do what is in their power to make damnation as

sure to themselves as they possibly can. What influence this has on the whole nation is but too visible ; how the bonds of nature, wedlock, and all other relations are quite broken. Virtue is thought an antique piece of formality, and religion the effect of cowardice or knavery. These are the men that would reform the world, by bringing it under a new system of intellectual and moral principles ; but, bate them a few bold and lewd jests, what have they ever done, or designed to do, to make them be remembered, except it be with detestation ? They are the scorn of the present age, and their names must rot in the next.

Here they have before them an instance of one who was deeply corrupted with the contagion which he first derived from others, but unhappily heightened it much himself. He was a master indeed, and not a bare trifler with wit, as some of those are who repeat, and that but scurvily, what they may have heard from him or some others, and with impudence and laughter will face

the world down, as if they were to teach it wisdom : who, God knows, cannot follow one thought a step further than they have conned it ; and take from them their borrowed wit and their mimical humour, and they will presently appear, what they indeed are, the least and lowest of men.

If they will, or if they can think a little, I wish they would consider, that by their own principles they cannot be sure that religion is only a contrivance ; all that they pretend to is, only to weaken some arguments that are brought for it ; but they have not brow enough to say, they can prove that their own principles are true.

So that at most they bring their cause no higher, than that it is possible religion may not be true. But still it is possible it may be true, and they have no shame left that will deny that it is also probable it may be true ; and if so, then what madmen are they who run so great a hazard for nothing !

By their own confession, it may be there is a God, a judgment, and a life to come ; and if so, then he that believes these things, and lives according to them,

as he enjoys a long course of health, and quiet of mind, an innocent relish of many true pleasures, and the serenities which virtue raises in him, with the good will and friendship which it procures him from others ; so when he dies, if these things prove mistakes, he does not outlive his error, nor shall it afterwards raise trouble or disquiet in him if he then ceases to be. But if these things be true, he shall be infinitely happy in that state, where his present small services shall be so excessively rewarded.

The libertines, on the other side, as they know they must die, so the thoughts of death must be always melancholy to them ; they can have no pleasant view of that, which yet they know cannot be very far from them. The least painful idea they can have of it is, that it is an extinction and ceasing to be ; but they are not sure even of that. Some secret whispers within make them, whether they will or not, tremble at the apprehensions of another state ; neither their tinsel wit, nor superficial learning, nor their impotent assaults upon the weak side, as they think, of religion,

nor the boldest notions of impiety, will hold them up then ; of all which I now present so lively an instance, as perhaps history can scarcely parallel.

Here were parts so exalted by nature, and improved by study, and yet so corrupted and debased by irreligion and vice, that he who was made to be one of the glories of his age was become a proverb ; and if his repentance had not interposed, would have been one of the greatest reproaches of it. He knew well the small strength of that weak cause, and at first despised, but afterwards abhorred it. He felt the mischiefs, and saw the madness of it ; and therefore, though he lived to the scandal of many, he died as much to the edification of all those who saw him ; and because they were but a small number, he desired that he might, even when dead, yet speak. He was willing nothing should be concealed that might cast reproach on himself, and on sin, and offer up glory to God and religion. So that though he lived a heinous sinner, he died a most exemplary penitent.

It would be a vain and ridiculous inference, for any from hence to draw arguments about the abstruse secrets of predetermination ; and to conclude, that if they are of the number of the elect, they may live as they will, and that divine grace will at some time or other violently constrain them, and irresistibly work upon them. But as St. *Paul* was called to that eminent service for which he was appointed in so stupendous a manner, as is no warrant for others to expect a similar vocation ; so, if upon some signal occasions such conversions fall out (which how far they are short of miracles, I shall not determine) it is not only a vain but a pernicious imagination for any to go on in their ill ways, upon a fond conceit and expectation that the like will befall them. For whatsoever God's extraordinary dealings with some may be, we are sure his common way of working is by offering those things to our rational faculties, which, by the assistance of his grace, if we improve them all we can, shall be certainly effectual for our reformation ; and if we neglect or abuse these, we put our-

selves beyond the common methods of God's mércy, and have no reason to expect that wonders should be wrought for our conviction ; which, though they sometimes happen, that they may give an effectual alarm for the awakening of others, yet it would destroy the whole design of religion, if men should depend upon, or look for, such an extraordinary and forcible operation of God's grace.

And I hope that those, who have had some sharp reflections on their past life, so as to be resolved to forsake their ill courses, will not take the least encouragement to themselves in that desperate and unreasonable resolution of putting off their repentance till they can sin no longer, from the hopes I have expressed of this lord's obtaining mercy at the last ; and from thence presume that they also shall be received, when they turn to God on their death-beds. For what mercy soever God may show to such as really were never inwardly touched before that time ; yet there is no reason to think that those, who have dealt so disingenuously with God and their own souls,

as designedly to put off their turning to him upon such considerations, should be then accepted with him.

They may die suddenly, or by a disease that may so disorder their understandings, that they shall not be in any capacity of reflecting on their past lives. The inward conversion of our minds is not so in our power, that it can be effected without divine grace assisting. And there is no reason for those, who have neglected these assistances all their lives, to expect them in so extraordinary a manner at their death. Nor can one, especially in a sickness that is quick and critical, be able to do those things that are often indispensably necessary to make his repentance complete ; and even in a longer disease, in which there are larger opportunities for these things. Yet there is great reason to doubt of a repentance begun and kept up merely by terror, and not from any ingenuous principle. In which, though I will not take it on me to limit the mercies of God, which are boundless, yet this must be confessed, that to delay repentance with such

a design, is to put the greatest concernment that we have, upon the most dangerous and desperate issue that is possible.

But if they will still go on in their sins, and be so partial to them as to use all endeavours to strengthen themselves in their evil course, even by those very things which the providence of God sets before them for the casting down of these strong holds of sin ; what is to be said to such ? It is to be feared, that if they obstinately persist, they will by degrees come within that curse, “ He that is unjust, let him be unjust still : and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.” But if our gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

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